

Towards An Asian Lutheran Identity and Self Understanding



Report



**THE LUTHERAN
WORLD FEDERATION
ASIA LUTHERAN COMMUNION**

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**Towards An Asian Lutheran
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Forward

The search for an identity has been an ongoing journey of LWF since its founding in 1947 in Lund, Sweden. As LWF responded to the needs of the world, it continued to reflect on its self-understanding in relation to the mandate and nature of its mission.

One significant milestone was the shift of its identity from federation to communion in July 2003 at the Tenth Assembly held in Winnipeg, Canada. It conveys the self-understanding that we are a family, a close-knit communion more than a formal and structured relationship of a federation. This new identity continues to inform and guide the work LWF does.

At the same time, the world is going through great changes in the midst of post-modern reforms driven by the vehicle of globalization. Of significance are the changes in the theological and social landscapes worldwide, to which churches have to respond individually and collectively.

The LWF Asia region launched the process of its search for a Lutheran identity and self-understanding in Asia context in 2012. This was facilitated by a series of annual conferences inaugurated in 2012 and will culminate and conclude in 2017, coinciding with the commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. The final outcomes would be Asia's contribution to the global communion for this landmark commemoration.

The first two conferences delved into the meaning and implications of a Lutheran identity and self-understanding in Asia context. They identified core areas on which an Asian Lutheran identity and self-understanding could be defined and developed. This booklet is a report on the 3rd conference held in November 2014 in Medan, Indonesia. It reflects the cumulated outcomes of

the three conferences. It is acknowledged that these outcomes still need further deliberation and refinement.

A special word of thanks to all contributors and, especially, to the editor, Revd Dr Wilfred John.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'William Chang', with a long horizontal stroke extending from the end.

Revd Dr William Chang
Area Secretary for Asia
Department For Mission and Development
Geneva, March 2015
Lutheran World Federation

INTRODUCTORY PAPER

Basic Elements of Lutheran Identity

(By: KENNETH MTATA-LWF)

I. LUTHERAN IDENTITY – A CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGE

In a time of much uncertainty and confusion both in society and in the churches, in a time of growing religious pluralism, and in a time of closer ecumenical relations between many churches, Lutherans are challenged to respond to the question "what constitutes our Lutheran identity, what shapes our profile, our "face" as Lutheran Christians and as a Lutheran church?" Christians in other churches face similar questions. In the centuries since the Reformation Lutheran identity often has been described in terms of difference - in line with a frequent manner of defining an identity: We are Lutherans because we are different from Roman Catholics, or: as Lutherans we differ from the Reformed in our understanding of the Lord's Supper, etc. In recent decades, however, the ecumenical encounters between churches and especially the bilateral dialogues between Christian World Communions (i.e., confessional families) have led to a new appreciation of confessional identities and their rich heritage and gifts. Certainly, aspects of these identities that have divided the churches must remain on the agenda of ecumenical

dialogue. But increasingly confessional identities are now understood as being open to a sharing of theological and spiritual gifts on the way of overcoming dividing differences. It is in this new context that we ask "what constitutes Lutheran identity" for the sake of our own self-understanding as Lutherans and our ability to give an account of our faith to our contemporaries and as partners in the ecumenical process of renewal and reconciliation.

II. BASIC ELEMENTS OF LUTHERAN IDENTITY

What are, then, the elements that shape Lutheran identity? They are, first of all, theological elements. The Lutheran Reformation was a theological movement, seeking to clarify in a concentrated intellectual effort the foundations of our faith and assurance. But these theological elements were at the same time pastorally orientated. They represented a theological effort for the sake of the living faith of people. Martin Luther's own struggle in the monastery at Erfurt was marked by such an interrelation between theological clarification and receiving the assurance of God's unmerited grace. We find the same interrelation, often overlooked, in the Lutheran Confessions, and we will see this interrelation when we look now at those basic faith convictions that make up Lutheran identity.

1. The Triune God alone is the exclusive source and agent of our salvation and of all knowledge of God.

The Lutheran theological and spiritual tradition is shaped by the faith that all human religious efforts, all human spirituality and morality are preceded by the primary, prevenient and

exclusive initiative of God. It is the Triune God, Father and Creator, Son and Savior, Holy Spirit and source of faith, who comes to us lost human beings for our salvation. God comes to us in the incarnation of the Son, suffers for us on the cross of Jesus Christ, and takes us in Christ's resurrection to a new life with Christ. Through the work of the Holy Spirit God creates faith and is with us. God continues to come to us again and again through human words in the proclamation of the one Word and, together with elements of creation, in the sacraments. We human beings are not able, our Lutheran faith also tells us, to approach God with our philosophical speculations and intellectual efforts. It is God who has revealed himself in the history of salvation from creation to fulfilment and thus has enabled us to grasp a glimpse of his nature and purpose. This movement of God towards us, and not the other way round, is the dominating motive, the "Leitmotiv" of all Lutheran thinking and believing. It is not an abstract theological idea, but a pastoral assurance: we can be confident that God's coming to us is the true and only way to the knowledge of God, to salvation, to certainty of faith, and to a fulfilled life.

2. God justifies and liberates us.

Since the time of the Reformation, the doctrine of the justification of the sinner by faith alone and through God's grace alone stands at the center of evangelical faith. Justification or acquittal of the sinner means that without conditions and apart from human religious efforts the sin and guilt of humans is forgiven and the broken relationship with God and with other human beings is being restored. This gift is offered to human beings through the gracious movement of God toward sinners

that has become tangible and effective in Jesus Christ. When human persons accept this gift in faith, they are declared and made righteous by God's grace. They are clothed with Christ's righteousness. Thus, the human person is turned around from the focus on himself/herself and toward God and other human beings. We remain sinners but are liberated from the domination of sin. This change for our life is a gift of God that seeks to be grasped by us and is meant to renew our inner being. Thus, we are sinners and justified ones at the same time (*simul justus et peccator*).

This message of justification for Christ's sake is considered the summary of the Gospel. It is the basis of Christian existence and the criterion for judging the proclamation, teaching, and forms of life of the church. The doctrine of justification was the central doctrinal difference between the Lutheran and Roman Catholic tradition at the time of the Reformation and since. The Lutheran-Catholic agreement on this doctrine that was achieved during the last three decades was celebrated at Augsburg/Germany on Reformation Day, October 31st 1999. It was an event of church-historical significance.

3. God speaks and acts through the proclamation of the Gospel and the celebration of the sacraments.

These two "means of grace", as we call them, have always been of equal and fundamental significance for the Lutheran church. Against certain Reformation movements such as the "Spiritualists" and "Enthusiasts" ("Schwärmer") whose followers claimed to have received an inner, direct spiritual revelation and enlightenment, Martin Luther and his friends have always

emphasized that God acts through outward means: His Word and sacrament that come to us "extra nos", from outside of ourselves.

The Triune God has freely bound himself to these two means of grace. Through the proclaimed Word God grants his grace and forgiveness. In baptism he accepts us as his children and incorporates us into his church. In the Lord's Supper he is truly present in Jesus Christ for our salvation. Thus, through these means God the Father grants us his grace. Through them the living Lord Jesus Christ meets us and is present with us and with his church. Through them God the Holy Spirit creates faith in us and builds the church. All this results in a certainty that does not depend on our own efforts, but is based on the assurance of the gift of God's grace and salvation.

4. The Word of God, addressed to human beings, comes to us in the form of Law and Gospel.

This distinction - but not separation - between God's law and God's Gospel has become important in Lutheranism as a means to protect the unconditional character of the Gospel. Without preconditions or human religious or moral achievements, God's grace and the certainty of faith are given to those who put their trust solely in God and his Gospel.

Christ has removed a false application of God's law as a way to salvation whereby the law was understood as promising: if you do this or that then God will consider this as your merit and this will be rewarded by God's grace. Rather, according to biblical and Lutheran understanding, God's Word as Law, which are the commandments and instructions of God, remains in

force in the sense of a mirror in which the human person will recognize his/her failure and guilt and, as a consequence, will seek God's mercy. Besides this critical significance, God's Word as law also has a positive one: It helps to order and preserve human life in community and it provides those who have accepted the Gospel with guidance for the moral orientation of their Christian lives.

5. The Church is a community of believers.

The Lutheran Reformation has regarded the church in the first place as a living community of people, more precisely: of believers, and not primarily as an institution or organization. However, this community does not come into existence when people who are sympathetic to each other and have similar interests come together on their own initiative. Here, too, lies the initiative with God who builds the church "from the outside". The Holy Spirit, through Word and Sacrament, creates faith in people and assembles them in a community of believers and saints. This community is an expression of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church that is confessed by Lutherans, together with other Christians, in the Nicene Creed of 381. In this church the Holy Spirit grants forgiveness of sin and sanctifies Christians for a new life of piety, witness and service in the world.

6. Lay people and ordained pastors are members with equal rights of the general priesthood of all believers.

Over against the medieval subordination of the laity to the clergy the Lutheran Reformation emphasized the equality, grounded in their baptism, of all Christians before God. This

equality is lived out in the "general priesthood of all baptized believers" who exercise their priesthood by interceding before God for other people and by announcing the forgiveness of sins to their neighbours in family, among friends and among other people. At the same time the ordained pastors are seen as exercising an office that is instituted by God and that is essential for the church. They carry out a ministry of "publicly" - that is in responsibility to God and to the church - proclaiming the Word and administering the sacraments and exercising pastoral leadership. Pastors and bishops encourage the ministry of the members of the general priesthood and rely also on their support and cooperation.

7. The Lutheran Church is the Church of Jesus Christ since the first disciples of Jesus.

The Lutheran reformers did not intend to found a new church. They wanted to reform and renew the existing church. From the beginning they claimed to be part of the continuity of the church since the time of the New Testament, a continuity that was no longer maintained by their contemporary late medieval church. The claim to continuity was supported by the affirmation of the fundamental dogmas and teachings of the Christian church as they had been developed by the whole church during the first centuries. This claim was also underlined by the inclusion of the three early Creeds, the Apostolic, Nicene, and Athanasian ones, in the collection of the Lutheran Confessions. These writings also refer again and again to the great theologians of the church of the first centuries (the church fathers), even to popes and old ecclesiastical regulations in order

to make clear that nothing new had been introduced and that there is no intention of separation and becoming a sect.

Yet continuity and tradition were not only emphasized concerning doctrine, but also concerning the forms of ecclesiastical life and order - but always renewed on the basis of biblical and Reformation principles. This included the traditional forms of the liturgy, confession of sin and absolution, the office of bishop, certain Christian customs and festivals, forms of ecclesiastical art, etc. Here, the Lutheran Reformation was much more traditional than the more radical Reformed one. If such theological and spiritual traditions are kept open for new interpretations and expressions, then continuity and tradition as an element of Lutheran identity can be a great internal and external help for our lives as Christians and churches in our societies that have lost orientation and are threatened in many ways.

8. Christians should be co-operators of God in the world.

The Lutheran Reformation has clearly distinguished between church and world as two different areas/realms of God's action. In the church God acts through the Gospel in Word and Sacrament and grants people the certainty of their salvation. In the world God acts for the preservation and renewal of his creation through secular institutions and orders and within them through Christians and Non-Christians who exercise their responsibility in family, profession, and public offices. In this perspective of the two realms of God's action, secular institutions and persons cannot claim to mediate salvation to

people. The church, on the other hand, cannot claim to rule the world with the Gospel.

This is the content of the so-called Lutheran doctrine of the two kingdoms that was often misunderstood and also misused. It was misunderstood and misused whenever both realms, church and world, were separated from each. As a consequence the secular realm was accorded such a complete independence that any idea of the action of God and of his church within the secular realm was excluded. The misuse on the other side was whenever the church was accorded such a priority over the world that the church claimed to rule state and society (as a theocracy). The doctrine of the two kingdoms is properly understood where it is presented as the distinction between the *two ways of God's reign and action*: in the church for the salvation of the believers, in the world for the welfare of all people. God is active in both realms, Christians live in both realms. Christians should exercise their secular responsibility as participation in God's sustaining and transforming action and in the struggle against the power of evil. They should be co-operators of God for more justice and peace for all people.

9. Holy Scripture is the supreme authority for faith and life of the church.

Like the European Reformation as a whole, the Lutheran Reformation was a movement inspired by the witness of Holy Scripture. The intellectual movement of Humanism from the 14th to 16th centuries had prepared new editions of the original Hebrew and Greek texts of the Bible. This provided the tools for intensive scientific study of the Bible and many new translations.

In this way the Bible came into the hands of many people and furthered their understanding of the faith. The study and translation of the Bible were also encouraged because of the Lutheran understanding of the priesthood of all believers and the responsibility of the laity. This view requires a well educated laity including their knowledge of the Bible. Accordingly, Lutherans have learned from the reformers to respect and eagerly use Holy Scripture as the decisive authority for the faith, life, and institutions of the church.

Lutherans have generally understood the authority of Holy Scripture not in terms of the "letter", i.e., of regarding the Bible as a collection of "holy" or verbally inspired texts between two covers but have based biblical authority on its witness to the Gospel, the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ, which is at the center of the Bible. Furthermore, the Lutheran church does not consider the authority of Holy Scripture in isolation from the theological and spiritual tradition of the church.

10. The Lutheran church is a confessing church.

The confession of faith before God and human beings was for Lutherans from the beginning a basic element of their Christian existence. The common action of confessing the faith is understood as the necessary response of believers to God's gift of salvation. The formulated confessional texts and creeds provide the Christian community with orientation, unity, and identity: "Look, this is what we believe and which is the foundation of our personal and common certainty!" Because of this high esteem of confession, the early Creeds as fundamental confessions of faith play a central role in Lutheran worship and in the Lutheran Confessions. The Lutheran Confessions are

regarded as an important tool both in the formation of lay people and pastors and as part of the theological basis in church constitutions. The Confessions provide a hermeneutical focus for the interpretation of Holy Scripture, they serve as guidance for the understanding of the faith of the church, and they constitute a criterion for the distinction between right and false teaching. The Confessions are the foundation for holding together and expressing the community within each Lutheran church and they serve as a bond of unity among the Lutheran churches worldwide

11. The Lutheran church is a theologically active church.

Within Lutheranism, theological studies and research play an important role. The scholarly achievements of Lutheran theologians have enriched the intellectual history of the last five centuries. This emphasis on theological study has led very often to lively and sometimes also ridiculous quarrels among Lutheran theologians about the right understanding of the truth. Yet behind this great and combative theological tradition stands a serious commitment to interpret for each new generation the message of the Bible and the truth of the Christian faith that are to be proclaimed here and now. This intensive theological reflection on issues of Christian faith and life has had a remarkable impact on the social, political and cultural life of many countries,

12. A worldwide Lutheran communion has emerged.

A rather new element of Lutheran identity is the reality and experience of a worldwide communion of Lutheran

churches. It was only in the 20th century that the Lutheran churches have become conscious of the fact that they belonged to a family of churches that was present in much of Europe, but also in North America and increasingly in Africa, Asia, Australia, and Latin America. This Lutheran communion has its basis and unity in the common understanding and proclamation of the Gospel in Word and Sacrament grounded in the witness of Holy Scripture and guarded and expressed by the Lutheran Confessions to which all Lutheran churches are committed.

The communion of Lutheran churches is bound together by the Lutheran Confessions and expressed in sacramental and spiritual fellowship (sometimes called "altar and pulpit fellowship"), in solidarity with one another and mutual assistance, in common studies and social cooperation, and in ecumenical relationships with other churches. The Lutheran World Federation, founded in 1947, is the instrument of the communion of 136 Lutheran churches.

13. Lutheran identity expressed in specific forms of life.

The fundamental theological convictions that shape Lutheran identity are reflected and complemented also by visible, "hearable", and tangible forms of Lutheran life that are part of the profile of Lutheran churches. These forms of life include:

(1) the great significance that is attributed to the practice of *Christian education* in order to lead young people to an understanding of the baptismal faith and to help all members of the church to grasp the meaning of their faith in order to lead a responsible Christian life in the church and in the world;

- (2) the use and renewal of *classical/traditional liturgical forms of worship*, which we share with several other Christian traditions;
- (3) a remarkable and today often forgotten *high esteem of the sacraments* in the practice of the church and the customs of the people;
- (4) a rich *treasure of hymns*, many of whom are a sung interpretation of the faith, a treasure that is today shared with other Christian traditions;
- (5) an outstanding history of great *Lutheran church music* that has become part of the cultural heritage of the world;
- (6) certain *forms of piety* such as daily Bible readings, prayers in families, etc., and diverse spiritual movements such as Pietism and different Awakenings that have influenced the spiritual life and missionary as well as diaconic outreach of Lutheran churches;
- (7) a rich heritage of pioneering diaconic work, including orders of deaconesses, which has made Lutheran social work one of the largest Christian social services in the world;
- (8) the liberty for *different forms of the ministry/office and organization* of the church as long as these serve the essential tasks of proclaiming the Word and administering the sacraments;
- (9) and finally the overarching figure of the reformer and “father in the faith”, *Martin Luther*. With his theological, spiritual, and cultural impact he has become a major formative and uniting instrument of Lutheran self-awareness and identity.

These elements of Lutheran identity do not simply form a kind of mosaic called “Lutheran identity”. Rather, they are intimately connected with one another and related to each other in a fundamental common reality of faith and life. This reality is comprehended by the message of the Gospel in the form of the

promise of the gracious and justifying action of God in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit, by the pastoral application of this message in favor of the certainty (confidence, assurance) of the faith and life of Christians, and by the ecclesial expression of the Gospel message in the form of the assembly of believers and saints.

The elements and forms of Lutheran identity have often not been realized and sometimes forgotten and even betrayed. But their misuse does not devalue their use. Accordingly, the identity as described above remains valid and effective as an orientation and commitment for our faith and life as Lutherans and calls us to permanent renewal and new interpretation of our identity. This identity is not simply a theory. One can recognize it in Lutheran churches. Sometimes it is more clearly expressed and lived in this or that congregation or church, sometimes in other congregations and churches.

It is also true that certain elements of Lutheran identity are to be found in other Christian churches as well. But interrelated with one another and shaped by our Lutheran history and ethos, these convictions and elements of Lutheran identity form in a particular way the faith, nature, and life of the Lutheran community of over 65 million Christians. Among them Lutheran identity is lived as a specific form of our broader *common Christian identity* that we share with other churches.

PRESENTATION 1

The Biblical Foundations of Diakonia: Christian Caring Service and the Growth of the Word of God, a Perspective from the Book of Acts.

(By: Po Chu Groenvold)

1.Introduction

In the past, the biblical foundations of diakonia were built on Christian anthropology, God's justice, his merciful nature as expressed in His covenantal relationship with Israel, such as the laws protecting vulnerable groups (e.g. widows, orphans, strangers, the poor), Jesus' call to serve (Luke 4:18-19; Mark 10:45), Jesus' teaching about serving the needy (Matt 25:31-46; Luke 10:25-37), his practice of caring service (e.g. healing, exorcism, having fellowship with the marginal and despised people), his commissioning of his followers to serve one another and the needy (Luke 9:1-2; John 13:13-17; 17:8), and the diakonia practiced by the early church (Acts 6:1-7; 2 Cor. 8-9).

When it comes to the book of Acts, the summaries (Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35; 5:12-16), the installation of the Seven (6:1-7) and the helping of the poor in the Jerusalem church (11:27-30) are the main texts used to illustrate the diaconal nature of the Early church. In this article, I will attempt to show that diakonia is closely related to the growth of God's word. By "diakonia" I mean the caring ministry of the Church.

My investigation of the topic will follow this procedure: First, I determine the meaning of ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ ἤϋξανεν (the word of God continued to grow) or ὁ λόγος τοῦ κυρίου ἤϋξανεν (the word of the Lord continued to grow) in Acts 6:7; 12:24 and 19:20, summaries occurring in significant junctions of the book of Acts. Secondly, my attention will turn to the relation between these three summaries and their overarching sections (2:1-6:6; 8:4-12:23; 13:1-19:19). This overview will help us to see how caring service is related to the proclamation as well as the multiplication of believers. The observations will contribute to the quest of the relationship between caring service and ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ/τοῦ κυρίου ἤϋξανεν (the word of God/the Lord grew).

My reading will focus on the text, rather than the author or events behind the text, which is the focus of historical enquiry. I shall interpret the biblical passages with primary references to the larger literary context of Acts. So, in the examination of the passages, attention will be paid not only to what is said in the text but also to what is said through the story.

2. The meaning of ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ (or τοῦ κυρίου) ἤϋξανεν

While ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ ἤϋξανεν (the word of God continued to grow) appears in Acts 6:7 and 12:24, ὁ λόγος τοῦ κυρίου ἤϋξανεν (the word of the Lord continued to grow) is found in 19:20. The difference between these two expressions is too small to matter. Commentators have come up with at least three interpretations of the expressions: First, they refer to growth of the community.¹ Secondly, they point to the powerful appeal of the word of God.² Thirdly, they are about the spread of the gospel.³

In these two similar expressions, the word of God or the Lord is personified, as it can grow by itself. It is logical to understand that God or the Lord directs his word, as it is often pointed out that he has added believers to the church (Acts 2:47; 5:14; 6:7; 12:24). It implies that God has blessed his word. In my opinion, ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ (or τοῦ κυρίου) ἤϋξανε refers to the spread of the gospel and the extent of the impact of the gospel on people (a combination of the second and third interpretations above). Let me justify my stand as follows.

The expressions refer to the spread of the gospel geographically, because they appear at the crucial junctions of Acts.⁴ The expression ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ ἤϋξανε appears in 6:7. This verse has two functions: It concludes the episode of the appointment of the Seven men (6:1-7) as well as the spread of the word of God in Jerusalem (2:1-8:3). Although 6:7 is not near the end of the section, there are no more conversion stories or remarks about the spread of the gospel after 6:7.⁵

The same expression ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ ἤϋξανε appears again in Acts 12:24 at the end of the section about Judea and Samaria (8:4-12:25). It occurs right before Paul is sent out by the Antioch Church to places beyond Palestine (13:1-3). Acts 12:25, on the one hand, follows up the collection of relief by the Antioch church for the poor in the Jerusalem church (11:27-30); on the other hand, it directs towards Antioch, where the next section (13:1-19:20) begins.

A similar expression ὁ λόγος τοῦ κυρίου ἤϋξανε appears in Acts 19:20. Although 19:20 is not near the end of the section about the spread of the gospel beyond Palestine (13:4-28:31), it concludes the ministry of Paul as a free missionary, for soon Paul would be arrested (21:33), and he would remain under arrest

until the end of Acts. From 19:21 to the arrest of Paul, there is no further narrative or remark about the spread of the gospel.

These two similar expressions really sum up the spread of the gospel at crucial junctions in Acts. This aspect is neglected by the first two interpretations above. These expressions also refer to the extension of the impact of the gospel, because ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ ἤϋξανεν in 6:7 and 12:24 is followed by the remark about the increase of the number of the disciples; whereas in 19:20, ὁ λόγος τοῦ κυρίου ἤϋξανεν is followed by ἵσχυεν (continue to prevail), a verb that expresses the power of the word of God. This aspect is neglected by the third interpretation above.

3. The three summaries (Acts 6:7; 12:24; 19:20) and their overarching sections

3.1. Acts 6:7 and Acts 2:1-6:6

Καὶ ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ ἤϋξανεν καὶ ἐπληθύνετο ὁ ἀριθμὸς τῶν μαθητῶν ἐν Ἱερουσαλὴμ σφόδρα, πολὺς τε ὄχλος τῶν ἱερέων ὑπήκουον τῇ πίστει. (Acts 6:7)

The word of God continued to grow; and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith. (My translation)

This verse consists of two parts: (a) "The word of God continued to grow;" and (b) "and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith." These two parts are related but not identical in meaning. Part (b) elaborates the meaning of part (a).

The multiplication of the number of the disciples in Jerusalem is the (or one of the) consequence(s) of the growth of the word of God.

As indicated earlier, this verse functions as the climatic summary of the spread of the gospel and the gospel's impact on people in Jerusalem⁶, but what has been narrated from Acts 2:1 to 6:6? The main content of this long passage is: (a) The word of God or the good news of Jesus was proclaimed in missionary speech (2:1-36; 3:11-26) and in defensive speech (4:31; 5:42); (b) caring services for the needy were practiced such as sharing with the poor (2:43-45; 4:32, 34-36), healing or exorcism (2:43;⁷ 3:1-10; 5:15-16) and taking care of the widows (6:1-7); (c) many people believed in the gospel (2:41, 47; 4:4); and (d) the apostles were persecuted (4:1-22; 5:17-40).

What can we say about the caring services in relation to the preaching of the gospel as well as the multiplication of believers? The list below will help us to see these relations more clearly.

- Peter's missionary speech (2:14-36)
 - *Many believed (2:41, 47)*
- Healing, exorcism, and sharing with the poor among them (service, 2:43-44)
- Peter healed a lame man outside the temple (service, 3:1-10)
- Peter witnessed about Jesus in the temple (3:11-26)
 - *Many believed (4:4)*
- Peter witnessed about Jesus before the Sanhedrin (4:1-22)
- Sharing with the poor among them (service, 4:32, 34-36)
- Healing and exorcism (service, 5:12-16)
 - *Many believed (5:14)*

- The apostles' witness about Christ before the Sanhedrin (5:12-42)
- The installation of the Seven to take care of the Greek speaking widows in the Jerusalem Church (service, 6:1-6)

First, caring service and the proclamation of the word go hand in hand.⁸ Secondly, the church's caring service (not only the proclamation of the gospel) is closely related to the increase in new believers. The five thousand new believers (Act 4:4) were not only the result of Peter's proclamation about Jesus in the temple (3:11-26). In fact, Peter began his preaching with reference to the healing of the lame man (3:12). It was because the crowd that listened to Peter's preaching was also the witness of the healing of the lame man in Jesus' name (3:1-10, 11). The remark about many new believers (men and women) in 5:14 is placed in the middle of a summary (5:12-16) that focuses on caring service. Moreover, the increase in new believers as noted in 6:7 is the result of that proclamation of the gospel and believers providing better caring service (6:2-4).

Thirdly, the increase of believers was the work of the Lord, not of man. Although the subject of ἐπληθύνετο (multiplied) is not spelled out in the text, it is reasonable to consider God as the logical subject of the multiplication of the number of disciples. God who directed and blessed his word was also the one who added believers to the Church.

To conclude, Acts 6:7 as an overarching remark tries to convey the following: In spite of persecution from outside the Church and problem from within the Church, the apostles were faithful in their proclamation of the word. Together with the rest of the Church, they faithfully served the poor, the sick, and people who were possessed by evil spirits. God blessed his word, its spreading and impact on people. The result was that, the

number of believers in Jerusalem continued to increase, among them men and women, and many priests. Although the High priest and chief priests were trying to put the apostles in prison, they had failed to do so. The victory was on God's side.

3.2. Acts 12:24 and Acts 8:4-12:23

Ὁ δὲ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ ἤϋξανεν καὶ ἐπληθύνετο. (Acts 12:24)

But the word of God continued to grow and multiplied.
(My translation)

While Acts 2:1-8:3 narrates the events that took place in Jerusalem, Acts 8:4-12:25 (apart from 9:26-30 and 11:1-18) ⁹ reports the events that happened in Judea and Samaria. In contrast to the previous section, which ends with the death of Stephen and the persecution of the Christian church in Jerusalem, 8:4-12:25 ends with the death of Herod the persecutor of the apostles James and Peter (12:24), and the return of Barnabas and Saul to Antioch after they had delivered relief to the Church in Jerusalem (12:25; cf. 11:27-30).

In Acts 12:24, the particle δὲ emphasizes the contrast between the death of Herod and the increase of the word of God. The object and the logical subject of ἐπληθύνετο (multiplied) are not spelled out; most probably it refers to the increase of the number of disciples by God as in 6:7. In addition to Acts 6:7, 12:24 also functions as the climatic summary of the spread and impact of God's word on people in Judea and Samaria. But what has been narrated from 8:4 to 12:23?

The main content of this long section is: First, The good news of Jesus was proclaimed to different people: the Samaritans (Acts 8:4-25), the Ethiopian eunuch (8:26-40), the

persecutor Saul (9:1-19), the Gentile Cornelius and his household (10:1-48), and the people in Antioch (11:19-21). Secondly, caring services were performed such as healing the sick, the possessed, the blind, the lame (8:7; 9:17-19, 32-35), escorting the persecuted disciple (9:30), raising the dead (9:36-43), having table fellowship with Gentile believers (10:48), and helping the poor in the Jerusalem church (11:27-30; 12:25). Thirdly, people believed in the gospel (8:12, 13; 8:36-38; 9:18, 31, 35, 42; 10:44-48; 11:21, 24). Fourth, disciples were persecuted, James the apostle was killed, and Peter was almost killed (9:1-2, 23-24, 29; 12:1-5).

What is the relation between caring service and the preaching of the gospel, as well as the multiplication of believers? The list below will help us to see these relations more clearly.

- Philip witnessed about Jesus to the Samaritans with word and service (8:4-25; service: 8:7-8, 13)
 - The Samaritans believed in the gospel and were baptized (8:12-13)
- Philip preached to the Ethiopian eunuch (8:26-40)
 - The eunuch believed in the gospel and was baptized (8:35-36)
- Ananias and other believers in Damascus witnessed about Jesus to Saul in word and service (9:10-22; service: 9:17-19; cf. 9:6, 11-12)¹⁰
 - Paul was baptized (9:18)
- The Jerusalem believers escorted Saul from Jerusalem to Caesarea in order to protect him from those who want to kill him (service, 9:30)
 - Believers in Judea, Samaria and Galilee increased in numbers (9:31)

- Peter healed Aeneas who had been bedridden for eight years (service, 9:32-35)
 - All the residents of Lydda and Sharon turned to the Lord because they saw Aeneas was able to walk. (9:35)
- Peter raised Dorcas from the dead (service, 9:36-43)
 - Dorcas being raised from the dead became known throughout Joppa, and many believed in the Lord (9:42)
- Peter proclaimed the gospel to Cornelius and his household (10:1-48)
 - Cornelius and his household were baptized (10:47-48)
- Peter has table fellowship with Gentile believers (service, 10:48)
- Anonymous Greek speaking believers proclaimed the gospel to the people in Antioch (11:19-21)
 - A great number became believers and turned to the Lord (11:21)
- The Antioch church helped the poor in the Jerusalem church (service, 11:27-30; cf. 12:25)

This overview shows again that proclamation and service go hand in hand. Such a relation is explicitly expressed in the narrative about Philip's ministry among the Samaritans (Acts 8:4-25) and Ananias' ministry to Paul.

The close relation between caring service and people's conversion is explicitly expressed in four conversion stories. First, Philip's powerful healing and exorcism testified Philip's proclamation (cf. Acts 14:3). Secondly, Ananias' "receiving" Saul at the house of Judas (9:6), the restoration of his sight (9:17-18), giving him guidance about what the Lord wanted him to do (cf.

9:15-16) and about who Jesus was (cf.9:19) were important parts in Saul's conversion to the Lord Jesus. Thirdly, when all the residents of Lydda and Sharon saw that Peter had healed Aeneas who had been bedridden for 8 years, they turned to the Lord (9:35). Fourthly, Peter's raising Dorcas from the dead became known throughout Joppa, and many believed in the Lord (9:42).

Acts 12:24, as an overarching remark, tries to convey the following: In spite of persecution, the church expands from Jerusalem to Damascus, and in spite of the martyrdom of Stephen and James the apostle, the church leaders (Philip, Peter) and many anonymous disciples (8:4) were faithful in their proclamation of the word.

The church was also faithful in caring for the needy. Services included not only healing and exorcism but also helping an enemy (Saul), raising the dead, and helping the poor brothers and sisters in other regions. Their caring services testified the word. As a result, God blessed his word, its spreading and impact on people. God multiplied the number of believers. There were Samaritans, Gentiles, and persecutors of the church among the new believers. Although Herod had killed James and wanted to kill Peter too (12:1-6), he had failed to do so. God's angel set Peter free from prison and punished Herod to death. The victory again was on God's side.

3.3. Acts 19:20 and Acts 13:1-19:19

οὕτως κατὰ κράτος τοῦ κυρίου ὁ λόγος ηὔξανε καὶ ἴσχυεν. (Acts 19:20)

So the word of the Lord continued to grow mightily and prevailed (My translation).

While Acts 8:4-12:25 narrate events that took place in Judea and Samaria, 13:1-28:31 reports Paul's witness about Jesus beyond Palestine all the way to Rome. In the first half of this long section, Paul did not work alone. At the least, Barnabas, Silas, Timothy were co-workers. As a free missionary Paul gave witness to Jesus in places such as Salamis, Paphos, Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, Derby, Perga, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth and Ephesus. However, from 21:33 until the end of Acts, that is the second half of Acts 13:1-28:31, Paul was no longer a free man, he was in custody, in Jerusalem and Caesarea as well as in Rome.

Of the three summaries about the growth of God's word, Acts 19:20 is the strongest. The immediate context of this summary concerns the mighty work of God and its impact in Ephesus (19:11-20).¹¹ Acts 19:20 emphasizes that the gospel is more powerful than the destructive power of sickness, evil spirits (19:12) and magic (19:19). The verb ἵσχυεν (prevailed), which appears in the summary, is also used in 19:16 to describe the "overpowering" of the exorcists by the demonic spirit.

As Acts 6:7 and 12:24, Acts 19:20 also functions as the climatic summary of the spread and impact of God's word on people. But what has been narrated from 13:1-19:19? This long section contains the following contents: First, the gospel of Jesus was proclaimed to Jews and Gentiles in different places beyond Palestine, such as Salamis (13:4-5), Paphos (13:7, 12), Antioch in Pisidia (13:16-41, 44-45), Iconium (14:1, 3), Lystra (14:9), Derby (14:21), Perga (14:25), Philippi (16:14, 31-33), Thessalonica (17:1-3), Berea (17:10-11), Athens (17:22-31), Corinth (18:4, 5, 11), Achaia (18:28 by Apollo) and Ephesus (18:28; 19:8). Secondly, services such as healing and exorcism were performed

for the sick and people possessed by evil spirits (14:8-10; 16:16-18; 19:11-12).

Thirdly, people came to faith, Jews and Gentiles (Acts 13:43; 17:4, 12), men and women. Some of their backgrounds are given. They were: a Roman officer (13:12; 17:34), a prison guard and his household (16:33-34), a business woman (16:14-15), and an official of a synagogue (18:8). Lastly, Jesus' witnesses experience opposition (13:8; 14:2; 14:19; 18:6, 12-13; 19:9-10) or persecution from unbelieving Jews and/or Gentiles: Paul and Barnabas were thrown out of Antioch of Pisidia (13:50); Paul was stoned (14:19); Paul and Silas were beaten and imprisoned (16:19-24); Jason and some other believers were accused by the crowd before the city officials (17:6); and Paul was accused by the Jews before the tribunal (18:12-13).

The list below will help us to see the relation between caring service and proclamation as well as conversion:

- Proclamation of the gospel in Salamis and Paphos (13:4-5; 7, 12)
 - The proconsul in Paphos believed (13:12)
- Proclamation in Antioch in Pisidia (13:16-41, 44-45)
 - People came to faith, Jews and Gentiles (13:43, 48)
- Proclamation in Iconium (14:1, 3)
 - Many believed (14:1, 4)
- Proclamation in Lystra (14:7)
- Paul healed a paralyzed man (service, 14:8-10)
- Proclamation in Derby, Perga (14:21, 25)
 - Many believed in Derby (14:21)
 - Number of believers increased daily in the newly established churches (16:5)
- Proclamation in Philippi (16:11-13), 31-33)

- Lydia and his household were baptized (16:15).
- Paul drove out a spirit of divination from a slave girl in Philippi (service, 16:16-18)
- Paul saved the prison guard from committing suicide by giving him comfort and preached the gospel to him (16:25-34; service, 16:28)
 - A prison guard and his household were baptized (16:31-33, 34)
- The newly converted prison guard washed the wounds of Paul and Silas and offered them food (service, 16:33-34)
- Proclamation in Thessalonica (17:1-3)
 - People came to faith (17:4)
- Proclamation in Berea (17:10-11)
 - People came to faith (17:12)
- Proclamation in Athens (17:22-31)
 - Some believed (17:34)
- Proclamation in Corinth (18:4, 5, 11)
 - Some Jews and many Corinthians believed and were baptized (18:8)
- Proclamation in Achaia by Apollo (18:28)
- Proclamation in Ephesus (19:8-10)
- Healing and exorcism performed by Paul in Ephesus (service, 19:11-12)
 - Some believed (19:18)

Having adequately illustrated in the previous two sections the relation between proclamation and service, service and conversion, this section focuses on reporting the positive spread of the gospel westward of Palestine and on persecution.

There are only a few reports of caring service, but enough to show that service accompanies the gospel.¹² Luke also shows

the function of caring service in the conversion of the prison guard in Philippi as well as in the conversion of the Ephesians.

Although caring services were done in three cities only (Lystra, Philippi and Ephesus),¹³ they were among the first cities Paul visited in different stages of his missionary journeys.¹⁴ This suggests that Luke continues to show the relation between proclamation and service, service and conversion in significant turns of his story.

Acts 19:20 as an overarching summary tries to express the following: In spite of opposition or even persecution from Jews and/or Gentiles, and in spite of disputes within the church about how Gentiles are to be saved (15:1-5), the word of God was faithfully proclaimed by Paul and his co-workers. The caring services of healing, exorcism, giving comfort, washing wounds and feeding the hungry were also practiced. One more time, God blessed his word, its spreading and its impact on people, with acts of power. As a result, it prevailed over the unbelievers' opposition, the power of the magician and the spirit of divination.

3.4. Summary

To sum up our observations, the three sections (Acts 2:1-6:6; 8:4-12:23; 13:1-19:19) overarched by 6:7; 12:24 and 19:20 respectively have similar main contents: the proclamation of the gospel, caring service, multiplication of believers, and persecution. In addition, caring services in all three sections go hand in hand with the preaching of the gospel. They are also closely related to the growth of the word of God. As overarching remarks, 6:7; 12:24 and 19:20 try to convey that the Early Church was faithful to her commission entrusted by the Lord in good or

bad days. The church or her believers faithfully proclaimed the gospel and served the needy, and God blessed his word so that the gospel continued to spread, and the impact of the gospel on people continued to extend.

However, there is also difference among these sections. In the first section, the close relation between service and people's conversion is often expressed in summaries, whereas in the second section, it is explicitly shown in conversion stories. Reports of caring service in the last section are much less than the first two, but they are placed in significant turns of Paul's missionary journey.

Caring ministry of the Early Church in the book of Acts extends from healing the sick, driving out evil spirits, and sharing one's resources with the needy in the first section (Acts 2:1-8:3), to giving protection to a follower of Christ, raising a believer from the dead, having table fellowship with Gentile believers, helping the poor in another community of faith, giving comfort, washing wounds and feeding the hungry. These services were action of genuine love in response to human need. They were not done with the motivation of winning people for Christianity or for any personal gain.

4. Christian caring service and the growth of the word of God

We find so many reports about Christian caring service throughout the book of Acts because it has its literary and theological functions. In terms of a literary function, Christian caring service, which goes hand in hand with the proclamation, corresponds to what Jesus did on earth. At the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, he revealed his call saying, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good

news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." (Luke 4:18-19) His call is about proclaiming the good news in words *and* actions. In fact the narrative of Jesus' first public speech in the synagogue in Nazareth is followed immediately by two reports of his healing: driving out evil spirits from a man and healing Simon's mother in law.

The call of Jesus is further confirmed in Luke 7:22 in Jesus' reply to John's disciples, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news brought to them." The reports of these good deeds of Jesus are spread throughout the Gospel of Luke.¹⁵

It is important to note that in sending out the twelve apostles and later the seventy, Jesus gave them the same commission, which was to proclaim the good news of God's kingdom and to heal the sick and the possessed (Luke 9:1-2; 10:1, 9), just as he had been doing. Indeed they did what Jesus had told them to do. The apostles departed and went through the villages, bringing the good news and curing diseases everywhere (Luke 9:6). The seventy also returned with joy, saying to Jesus, "Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!" (Luke 10:17)

Healing the sick and driving out evil spirits from the possessed are important part of the ministry of Jesus and his disciples. Therefore, it is not accidental that Luke reports so many good deeds of the disciples or the church in Acts. It is also not accidental that Luke's Peter uses "doing good and healing" (εὐεργετῶν καὶ ἰώμενος) to summarize one part of Jesus' ministry on earth (Acts 10:37-38). Luke's Peter described his

healing of the lame man as a "good deed" (εὐεργεσία, Acts 4:9) as well.

Theologically, the reports of caring service in the book of Acts show that the apostles are real followers of Christ, for they healed the sick and drove out evil spirits for the possessed like Jesus did. Philip and Paul shared the ministry of healing too. With the rest of the church, their good deeds extend to other kinds of services and regions outside Jerusalem. The caring ministry of the Early Church has also shown that the church was diaconal from the outset.

The literary and theological functions of Christian caring service in the book of Acts imply that to the Early Church caring service was part of their ministries. To be Jesus witness was to witness him in word and service. Thus, diakonia or caring ministry of the Early Church was closely related the growth of the word of God. Without the service of love, the gospel proclaimed in words only was incomplete. Without the caring service, the Early Church did not respond to Jesus' commission fully or faithfully. If this observation is correct, it is important for churches today especially churches which see caring service as secondary to preaching the gospel to reflect on their commission anew.

The study so far has shown that the Early Church was faithful in proclaiming the gospel as well as caring for the needy among their own in addition to other people in society. What the Church had done pleased the Lord. As the result, God blessed his word in terms of its spread and its impact on people. However, it is important to stress that neither proclamation nor caring service is a formula for church growth, because it was God who added believers to the Early Church.

Questions for Group Discussion:

1. Would you say that the word of God is increasing in your community or society? Why is it so?
2. Is diakonia understood and embraced by ministers or congregations as intrinsic element of being church or a means of winning people to Christianity only?
3. Does the ministry of word and the ministry of service go hand in hand in your church?
4. How is liturgia (celebration), kerygma (proclamation) and diakonia (service) related in your church?
5. Is Lutheran tradition help or a hindrance for Lutheran churches to become diaconal?

Endnotes

Powell, 1991, 65; Johnson, 1992, 107; Peterson, 2009, 235-236, 370.

² Tannehill, 1994, 81; Cheung, 1999, 436.

³ Bock, 2007, 264; Thomas, 2011, 162-163.

⁴ There are different suggestions about how the book of Acts should be structured. For example, some prefer to divide the writing according to the spread of the gospel geographically; while some use summaries to divide the structure.

⁵ Acts 6:8-8:3 is about Stephen's defense before the Sanhedrin and his martyr in Jerusalem.

⁶ See p. 2.

⁷ Although it is not explicit what "wonders and signs" (τέρατα καὶ σημεῖα) in Acts 2:43 refers to, yet "signs" (σημεῖα) in Acts 8:6 is elaborated in terms of healing and exorcism (8:7-8). In 5:12-16 "wonders and signs" (v.12) is closely related to healing and exorcism as well (vv15-16).

⁸ The close relationship between word and service is also expressed in Acts 4:32-36 (word, 4:33; service, 4:32, 34-35), the second summary in Acts. The summary highlights the internal sharing of material resources among the believers, with Barnabas as a concrete example. The description of the sharing in 4:32-36 is very similar to 2:42-47 the first summary in Acts.

⁹ Acts 9:26-30 is about the converted Saul in Jerusalem, and Acts 11:1-18 concerns a dispute in the Jerusalem church.

¹⁰ In epiphany the Lord Jesus told Saul that someone would tell him what he must do (Act 9:6). This someone turned out to be Ananias (9:10-12). When Ananias met Saul, he confirmed Saul's spiritual experience, restored his sight and baptized him (9:17-19). It is supposed that Ananias had revealed the Lord's plan for Saul (cf. 9:15-16) although the narrative does not explicitly say so.

¹¹ Peterson, 2009, 536; Witherington, 1998, 576.

¹² In fact there are more reports about Paul's caring service after Acts 19:20, such as the raising of a young man from the dead in Troas (20:7-12), helping the weak with his resources (20:34-35), bringing relief to the poor in Jerusalem (24:17), comforting and encouraging those escorting him (27:33-36), and healing the sick (28:8-9). These examples show that even after Paul had been arrested (21:33), he continued to serve people in need.

¹³ Paul's ministry in Lystra, Philippi and Ephesus is mentioned in 14:8-20; 16:13-40; 19:1-41 respectively.

¹⁴ The so-called three missionary journeys of Paul are recorded in Acts 13:1-14:28; 15:36-18:22; 18:23-21:36. From 21:37 Paul was no longer a free missionary.

¹⁵ For example, Luke 4:31-37, 38-41; 5:12-16, 17-26; 6:6-11; 7:1-10, 11-17; 8:43-48; 9:10-17, 37-43; 17:11-19; 18:35-43.

PRESENTATION 2

Asian Lutheranism: Indian Churches Self-Understanding and Lutheran Identity (By: Bishop Busi Suneel Bhanu)

I. Introduction

The missionary-minded German, Henry Melchior Muhlenberg's motto, '*Ecclesia Plantanda*' – the 'Church must be Planted' is realized, like in many other countries, in India too. Though originally, Muhlenberg was expected to travel to India as a missionary, due to paucity of funds at that time, he travelled to Pennsylvania in the United States of America and thus became the 'Sending-Missionary' to plant Lutheranism to many places in the world in general and in India in particular. In order to reflect on the Self-understanding of the work and witness of the Church in India wearing the Lutheran lenses and to cull-out insights about the Lutheran identity, this paper initially attempts to briefly trace the beginnings of Christianity and the Lutheran enterprise in India, and moves on to understand what Christianity, in this case, Lutheranism had and has been contributing to in molding the self-identity of individual believers and faith communities amid the continued challenges of religious plurality, insurmountable socio-cultural challenges,

politico-economic apathy and the ever-perpetuating evil of caste discrimination fostered by the majority religion - Hinduism.

In India, there are 11 (eleven) Lutheran Churches (1) which are distinct and unique by the separation of geographical boundaries, linguistic differences and accompaniment of different Western and European Mission Partners. On the one hand, the theologies, doctrines and mission and witness of these Churches are akin to each other, and on the other, they also are the constituent members of the United Evangelical Lutheran Churches in India (UELCI), which reflects the oneness of the communion of Lutheran Churches. However, in view of the difficulty in representing all these churches, the writer wishes to present Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church (AELC) as a focal point in articulating the 'Self-Understanding of the Church as being understood by the Lutheran communion in India and that of the 'Lutheran Identity'. Towards this journey, one needs to look at the advent of Christianity in this ancient country of mystery and intrigue.

II. The Beginnings of Christianity

Christianity in India takes pride in the fact that the Gospel of Jesus Christ reached its shores even before many of the countries in Europe and the West tasted the fruit of the Gospel and from where various Mission Organisations came into being with the expressive purpose of evangelising the world through the spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In other words, the Church in India has a longer history and a deeper antiquity than many of the historical churches in the world. Looking at the beginnings of the Church in India, two strong sources emerge about the advent of Christianity.

First, Apostle Thomas, one of the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ himself brought the Gospel to India in 52 CE (2) and the vibrant Mar Thoma Church (St. Thomas Church) in the southern part of India attests to this rich tradition. Second, a section of the scholars and Historians of the Church, rather than giving credence to the above tradition in view of lack of scientific proofs and evidences, emphasize the origin of the Church to the visit of merchants and missionaries of the East-Syrian or Persian Church in the 6th century A D.(3) However, the second part of the 15th century was important for the Church in India because during this time maritime adventurers from Western Europe, especially from Spain and Portugal discovered new sea routes to India for the purpose of trade and later established colonies and colonial governments. In 1498 CE, Vasco da Gama reached Calicut and as a consequence trading posts were established along the west coast of India. The Portuguese Governor of India at that time, Alfonso de Albuquerque encouraged marriages of the Portuguese with Indians and as a result an Indo-Portuguese Christian population slowly emerged and established in the Portuguese controlled settlements.

In fact, while a profitable trade was more important for the Portuguese, the desire of their Rulers was to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with those who came in contact with Portuguese and were benefitted under their patronage and protection. In order to achieve this, the Portuguese ships, along with merchandise, always carried priests and friars for evangelistic work. King John III of Portugal appealed to the newly formed Society of Jesus through the Pope to send missionaries to India to teach the Gospel and the result was the arrival of Francis Xavier in Goa on 6th of May 1542 and his arrival was a remarkable milestone in the Church's missions in the History of

Christianity in India. Close to a hundred years after Francis Xavier, the arrival of the Jesuit Missionary Roberto de Nobili in November 1606 radically changed the face of missionary movement with the use of indigenous methods – the first attempt at ‘inculturation’. Convinced of the importance of sharing the Gospel in native language and armed with fluency of speaking the local Tamil language he began the ‘downward infiltration’ model of evangelisation. In other words, he did adapt Indian socio-cultural and religious customs and traditions of the upper-caste Hindus donning the robes and leading a life-style of a Hindu *Sanyasi* in order to reach the majority upper caste-Hindus of India.(4) Along with the Roman Catholic Missionary enterprise, India was also inundated with the Protestant Missionary movement which includes the work of Lutheran Mission Organisations.

A). The Lutheran Communion and the Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church (AELC)

Indian has become a trading outpost for many of the European powers. The Dutch, the British, the French and the Danes, established their trading colonies mostly in South India. While the French were patrons of the Roman Catholic Missions, all the others supported and encouraged the Protestant missionary enterprise. Among these, that concern us is the Danish Mission at Tarangambadi (Tranquebar) and the credit of establishing Lutheran enterprise in India goes to King Frederick IV of Denmark. Bartholomew Ziegenbalg and Heinrich Pluetachau, two German young theologians and products of the Lutheran Revival movement – Pietism arrived as ‘Royal Missionaries’ on the 9th of July 1706. What is remarkable is that

they reached India with "... a clear and well thought-out plan to learn the native languages and launch an evangelistic movement..."(5) Ziegenbalg who was gifted with skills of languages, and with an earnestly acquired command over the native Tamil language, translated Luther's *Small Catechism* for use in catechetical classes for children.(6)

Even before the evangelistic vibrancy of the Tranquebar Mission, Christianity entered Andhra Desa (the present state of Andhra Pradesh and mission field to the Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church) in 1530 when a Franciscan Priest was sent as an Ambassador of the Portuguese to the Vijayanagara Empire where the reigning Ruler accorded permission to preach the new religion to those who were interested and sought to know. However, Christianity through the Roman Catholic missionary effort did not achieve much as their efforts and concentration were confined to the territories of Goa, Pondicherry and Tamilnadu.

Almost after three centuries of entry into the Telugu-speaking land by the Roman Catholic Missionaries, the Foreign Missionary Society of the Evangelical German Lutheran Churches in the United States of America which later came to be known as the Foreign Missionary Society of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States, came into existence with the two-fold purpose of spreading the Gospel to the un-reached parts of the United States of America and also to sponsor and send missionaries to foreign lands, and in 1839 decided to send John Christian Frederick Heyer,(7) as the first Missionary to India and he arrived in Guntur on July 31, 1842.(8) Thereafter, Louis P. Menno Valett, commissioned by the North German Mission Society reached Rajahmundry and started the Gospel-work on January 31, 1845.(9) These two important milestones in the

History of the AELC are annually celebrated as the 'Gospel Day'. While the spread of the Gospel was carried on by these two different Lutheran agencies among the Telugus, as separate and independent mission fields on behalf of two separate and different Mission Organisations, finally with the merger of Guntur and Rajahmundry mission fields, the Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church was constituted in 1927 and the same was registered under the Societies Registration Act of 1860 on April 21, 1932. From just three baptised adult members in 1842,(10) the year of its inception, today, the AELC excels as the largest Lutheran Church in the Lutheran Communion in India with an overwhelming 1,500,000 baptised membership, 4,000 congregations flourishing both in urban and rural areas and being shepherded by 800 pastors. However, like many other Protestant churches in India, the AELC is largely a Church of the Dalits. The moment, one talk about Dalits, one is looking at the identity of a person or a community.

III. Identity Assigned – *Asprisy* (the Untouchables)

The mention of the term, '*Dalit*' brings to the fore the important issue of 'identity'. Human beings posses multiple identities and based on certain factors one assumes diverse identities at the same time. Out of these multiple-diverse identities, some are self-explanatory, self-satisfying, self-dignifying, self-edifying and self-respecting and some others are derogatory and dehumanising. However, understanding and identifying the identity of a person is a complex process and being dependent on varied and diverse factors, it is a life-long search and struggle. Identity is multiple, changeable and at times can be overcome as well. For example, one can change his/her

identity of nationality through emigration and naturalization; one can also change the identity of his/her gender from male/female to female/male and to transgender through sex-change medical procedures and surgeries; and changing of religious and political identities are also not impossible. The avenues of change are numerous. I always wonder at these unending possibilities that offer some of us to choose alternate or self-satisfying identity/identities. However, when it comes to 'caste', especially in the Indian context, one is born into it and hence dies with the same caste-identity. When I reflect on my self-identity as a 'Dalit-Lutheran-Christian', I am confronted with the challenge of Prophet Jeremiah who says, 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots?' (Jeremiah 13:13a). In fact, this challenge of Jeremiah is true with reference to Dalit identity.

In the Indian society, certain categories of people who were not included in the *catur-varna* (the four-fold caste) system are known historically as the *asprisyā* (untouchables). One is not very sure about the exact period in which the evil of caste was dyed on the Indian social fabric, but it was the *Itihāsa* (Epics) composed between 500BC and 1000AD and *Dharmasāstra* (Manuals of Law) 1200 - 500BC period that consolidated and codified the rules and regulations, rights and responsibilities relating to caste and many other socio-religious and politico-economic traditions. There are different theories and views about the origin of caste system in India, the most popular being, the arrival of the fair complexioned *Āryans* on the Indo-Gangetic plains which marked the beginning of the practice of *varnā* and *jāti* or caste. The *Āryan* settlers not only devised and implemented the four main divisions of peoples – the *Brāhmin* (Priest), *Kshatriya/Rājanya* (King/Ruler), *Vaisya* (Trader) and

Sūdra (Artisan/Servant), but also gave the system strong religious moorings with the introduction of a 'creation story' in the *Purusa sūkta* of *Rigveda* which declares:

When they divided the *Purusa*, into how many parts did they arrange him? What was his mouth? What were his two arms? What were his thighs and feet called? The *brāhmin* was his mouth, his two arms were made the *rājanya* (Warrior), his two thighs the *vaiśya* (trader and agriculturist), from his feet the *sūdra* (servile people was born).(11)

Added to this, *Manusmṛiti* (the Law of Manu) offered a systematic articulation and interpretation of caste;

But the Sudra, whether bought or un-bought, he may compel to do servile work; for he was created by the self-existent (*svayambhu*) to be the slave of a Brahmin. A Sudra, though emancipated by his master, is not released from servitude; since that is innate in him, who can set him free from it?(12)

These injunctions were further reinforced by the Puranic myths and the renditions of the great epics, *Rāmāyana* and *Mahābhārata*. The three upper castes – the Brahmins, Kshatryias and Vaisyas are also known as *dvija* (the twice-born - physical as well as spiritual birth) and enjoyed the privilege of being adorned with the sacred thread, a religious sign of superior birth and a qualification to learn the sacred Vedas. The last in the caste hierarchy was the *Sūdra*, the servile caste, whose only duty, as already mentioned, is to serve the above mentioned three upper castes.

While all these four castes fall within the framework of caste in the majority Hindu religious tradition, there is also a large percentage of people who are not only differentiated from the other four castes but their social status as the lowest was also underlined. With the *Arthashastra* of Kautilya(13) written sometime between 4th and 5th centuries B. C. mentioning separate wells for the exclusive use of these people known as *candāla* (uncivilised) and restrictions from entering the village proper during the night. Thus, their segregation, and their ritual pollution gradually resulted in their untouchability. Further, Manu, the Brahmin Law-giver, in one stroke fashioned and consolidated the outcaste and untouchable status of the *candāla* forever in the following passage:

But the dwelling of *candālās* and *svapākās* shall be outside the village, they must be made *apapātrās*, their wealth (shall be) dogs and donkeys. Their dress shall be the garments of the dead, they shall eat) their food from broken dishes, black iron (shall be) their ornaments and they must always wander from place to place. A man who fulfils a religious duty shall not seek intercourse with them; their transactions (shall be) among themselves and their marriages with their equals. Their food shall be given to them by others (other than Aryan giver) in a broken dish; at night they shall not walk about in villages and towns. By the day (they) may go about for the purpose of their work ... that is a settled rule.(14)

Today these *candālās* who are popularly known as the untouchables (Dalits) constitute about 16.6% of the total Indian population. According to 1961 Census, these untouchables numbered 64 million out of a total population of 439 million; in 1971, they were estimated to have reached 80 million out of a

total population of 548 million; in 1991, they were numbered as 138 million in a total population of 846 million and In the latest 2011 enumeration, out of a total population of 1.21 billion, they constitute about 167 million. This means that at the beginning of the last decade, they constituted about 16 percent of the Indian population, and now at the beginning of this decade they are 16.6% of the total Indian population. There is not much agreement with regard to the actual population of the untouchables as public and private estimates vary between 175 and 225 million. For the present purpose, it might be useful to consider a conservative estimate of 180 million.

The figures would be substantially higher if the Dalits who embraced non-Hindu religions are taken into account. The Indian government considers only those Dalits within the Hindu fold, and all those who have converted to Christianity, Buddhism, Sikhism and Islam are not considered as a part of this social category since these religions claim to be casteless.⁽¹⁵⁾ Although estimates vary, of the 2.34 percent of the total Indian population who are Christian, between 50% and 70% are of Dalit background. Of the 0.76 percent of the total population who are Buddhists, about 0.65% percent are of Dalit origin.⁽¹⁶⁾ Without their consent, without their acceptance and without any fault of their own, the identity as '*asprisyā*' (untouchable) was forcibly assigned on them. In their struggle to wriggle out of this de-humanizing assigning caste-identity, the untouchables acquired their own identity that reflects their existential reality.

IV). Identity Adopted – '*Dalit*'

The analysis of the view and way of life of these untouchables reveal that these are a proud group of people, who

zealously guarded and maintained their identity and freedom as the original inhabitants of the land, as long as possible from the domination of the Āryan invaders.¹⁷ As a result, in an attempt of psychological genocide, the Aryan invaders used several derogatory and degrading terms and the same are continued to be used and employed by the Upper castes to describe and deface them and these are, *amānusya* (no-people/non-human) *antyaja* (last caste/exterior castes), *asprisyā/achūta* (untouchable), *asura/rākshasa* (demon), *avarṇa* (casteless), *chandāla* (uncivilized), *dāsa/dāsyu* (servant), *mleccha* (locals/natives), *Nisāda* (primitive hunting/food-gathering people) *pañcama* (fifth caste), *svapāka* (one who cooks the meat of dead-animal), etc., and some other identities such as Scheduled Castes (de-notified groups – British Colonial Government) Depressed Classes (B R Ambedkar), and *Harijan* (children of God – M K Gandhi).

In such a context of dehumanization through the assigning of derogatory terminology, the untouchables have chosen an identity for themselves by using the term '*Dalit*'. While the term *Dalit* really came to mean and reflect the existential reality and never-ending plight of those communities who suffer from caste (social and religious) oppression and consequent (economic and political) poverty, today, it has also come to be understood, as the need to revolt against the double oppression of ritual degradation and socio-economic-political deprivation. In fact, the term, *dalit*¹⁸ emerged more as a concept from the writings of two great Indian reformers, Mahatma Jyotirao Govindarao Phule and Babasaheb Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar. For Phule, while Sudras are last in the caste structure, *ati-sūdras* are the least of the people who are outside the caste system.¹⁹ In two of his books, *Who were the Sudras* and *The Untouchables*,²⁰ B. R.

Ambedkar deals with the issue of the untouchables. For Dalit Panthers, who popularized the concept, the term, *dalit* became a symbol of assertive pride and resistance to, as well as the rejection of the unending oppression of caste. Further it meant change and revolution, rather than remaining perpetually subjugated to caste and its bondage.²¹ The term chosen by the Dalits themselves has become a reality-reflective identity and as such, it has become the hallmark of self-respect, self-identity and self-assertion of the untouchable communities and their fighting slogan against the de-humanizing caste-oppression. Highlighting the relevance and importance of the term, *dalit* in the lives of the oppressed and suppressed people, Antonyraj, a Dalit leader and an academician declares,

Against all kinds of derogatory and humiliating names imposed and forced on Dalits which attribute hereditary impurity, the Dalits chose to call themselves as 'Dalit'. The term *dalit*, in fact identifies our oppressors, the non-Dalits that are the cause of our dehumanization. The word reflects the consciousness of our own un-free existence and outcaste experience, which form the basis for a new cultural unity and *dalit* ideology ... it also, indicates certain militancy. The name *dalit* is a symbol of change, confrontation and revolution.²²

For about three millennia of submissiveness and acceptance of discrimination and de-humanization without raising a voice of protest is the hallmark of the characteristic behaviour of Dalits. This silent surrender of selfhood resulted in Dalits offering voluntary sacrifice of their very lives for the benefit of the upper castes on the altar of their self-respect, self-dignity and self-identity, thereby becoming a 'no-people'. V. Devasahayam, a

Dalit theologian opines that caste as a totalitarian system not only forced Dalits into a comprehensive syndrome of slavery – social, political and economic, but also enforced a cultural annihilation through perpetual psychological genocide, resulting in the Dalit psyche being distorted and disfigured.²³ In other words, one can observe, the internalization of a lowered self-esteem, confusion of self-identity, self-hate in the very psyche of Dalits.

In spite of the ever-growing atrocities perpetuated against Dalits, today, one can also notice the non-complaining, non-protesting nature of a majority of Dalits and acceptance of the inhuman treatment being meted out to them day-in and day-out, simply because of the strong religious orientation of everything as one's *karma*. And therefore, the need of the hour is to regain the genuine identity that is robbed and deprived off by the so called Upper castes under the complex and sacrosanct garb of religious teachings, dogmas and doctrines of 'ritual purity' and the avoidance of ritual 'impurity' to maintain the moral cosmic order.

In such a context, the step forward for Dalits is to initiate a concerted effort to regain their self-image and identity as God's people from the status of 'no-people'. That is, to disown the tarnished image of ritually polluted being and thereby the deprivation of the self-dignity imposed, through a refreshed and life-renewing alternate social and religious identity. This means the recognition of the root-causes of the evil of caste, and boldly and firmly naming and affirming the institutions, conditions and contexts that have been put into place and play to dehumanize them. In such an effort, today, choosing the name, 'Dalit' has indeed become an affirmative symbol of their quest for an identity and rejection of alien identities forced on them. In other

words, *dalit* identity basically is an irreversible counter-cultural identity and consciously choosing the name, '*dalit*' is nothing but an awareness of selfhood, self-respect and self-dignity and that without any doubtless hesitation rejects the morals and methods, as well as the values and vagaries that romanticize caste as something socially desirable and religiously inevitable.

V. Identity Embraced – '*Created in God's Image*'

For a majority of Dalits, Hinduism through its multi-faceted shades and dimensions – its philosophical nuances, mythical mysteries, reflections of art and architecture and culture conundrums, conveys an irrevocable message of 'accept caste or perish'. Thus, the imposed perennial identity of the very existential reality as 'ritually impure' people; the forced acceptance of victimization through unrelenting religious discourses, and the determination to seek a spirituality to wriggle out of such a hopeless life-situation marked the beginning of a search of Dalits for an alternate religion that offers a liberative transformation and a self-emancipating identity that spells out humanization.

There were people who, having experienced the oppressive role religion played in Hinduism, declared, "Caste is a curse which must be abolished; to abolish caste, religion must be abolished; to abolish religion, God must be abolished."²⁴ But in reality, instead of rejecting and moving away from religion and God altogether, a majority of Dalits found liberating streams in other religious traditions such as Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Sikhism. These religious traditions, with egalitarian vision reflected in their religious teachings and practices, offered the potential, unlike Hinduism, to break down the oppressive

structures in society and root-out the caste distinctions and inequalities.

In fact, the Gospel of Jesus Christ when planted in the crucible of Indian socio-cultural soil has taken strong roots and blossomed to offer an identity *par excellence* to Dalits. The Gospel offered two truthful liberating messages: first, human beings are created in the 'Image of God' and hence the divine nature is necessarily an integral part of one's very being; that is to say, that no human being can be declared as 'ritually impure' and thereby untouchable; and second, being created in the Image of God, all human beings are equal without any hierarchical or horizontal differences in socio-cultural status. This powerful and double-edged message of the Gospel moved deep into the psyche of some of the Dalits who have been looking for a religion which would help and support them in their quest and effort to regain their robbed identity, deprived self-respect and spiritual enlightenment. Consequently India witnessed mass conversions of some groups of the untouchables to Christianity in search of a new identity and liberation from the oppressive structures of caste. In fact, it is not an exaggeration to say that the history of Dalit liberation movement is interwoven with the history of the Church in India.

Christian missionaries, both the Roman Catholic and Protestants, in their early decades preached the Gospel emphasising the consequences of sin, and the offer of grace of God and salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. They in fact, believed that like the class or rank in the European society when a person in India embraces Christianity, he/she does not need to worry about the caste or social status in the society as casteism is an inevitable and integral part of the Indian society.²⁵ That is to say that this view and way of Christian

missions in the early centuries in India fostered a policy of adaptation, in which caste was considered as a social system and an inseparable element of the Indian culture, rather than an adversary of the Gospel.²⁶ However, as time passed by, gradually, they came to the understanding of caste as a dehumanizing force of Hindu religious tradition and therefore chose to critique its evil nature.²⁷ Thus, during 19th century, the Protestant missionaries spent their energies condemning caste and its evil practices and minimising its influence among Christians, if not actually eliminating it completely. For example, a report of the Missionary Conference that met in Madras in February 1850 unequivocally declared saying,

Caste is one of the greatest obstacles to the progress of the Gospel in India. It meets and thwarts the Missionary, not only in bearing the unsearchable riches of Christ to the unconverted Hindus, but in building up the Native Church in faith and love. This has been painfully felt in Southern India, wherever Natives at their baptism have been permitted to retain it.²⁸

With such a conviction, they took an active role in highlighting the evils and disadvantages of caste system and the disabilities suffered by the outcastes, such as being deprived of the use of public roads and wells, access to schools, health facilities and deprivation of Dalits from sharing other common resources.

The message of Jesus' love for humankind irrespective of the distinctions of caste, creed and gender, and the critical attitude of missionaries towards the vagaries of caste, ignited mass conversion movements among Dalits who were deprived of their religious aspirations such as the prohibition to enter temples to worship God. Beginning in the 1840s, the mass conversion of

Dalits continued into the 1920s. Though these mass conversion movements did not occur at the pan-Indian level, these remarkable conversions took place among untouchables known as the *Mādigās* and *Mālās* of Andhra Pradesh, *Chuhrās*, *Bhangis* and *Chamars* in Punjab, and *Parayārs* and *Pulayās* in Tamilnadu. And further, the proportion of the converted Dalits varied from group to group and region to region.

In 1900, the South India Missionary Conference listed five motivational factors for Dalit mass conversions: i) the conviction that Christianity is the true religion; ii) a desire for protection from oppressors; iii) an aspiration to educate their children; iv) the acknowledgement that those who have become Christians improved both in character and social stature; and v) the influence of Christian relatives. However, the greatest motivation for Dalits is the radical and identity-transforming Gospel message that all people, including the untouchable Dalits are created in the Image of God and hence ritually not impure and share the divine nature, and being created by God, all are equal and precious in the sight of God. The missionaries noted that the injustice perpetrated by caste tyranny was one of the strongest factors that motivated Dalits to embrace Christianity.²⁹ On the one hand, Christianity offered Dalits a new and better social and religious identity which was not dependent on the approval and acceptance of the upper caste Hindus, and on the other, Christian message of God's sacrificial love, "even for the untouchable," appealed to them greatly.³⁰ In short, the search for improved social status, greater self-dignity, self-respect and self-satisfying new identity, liberation from the oppressive and dehumanising caste system, and a hope of fulfillment of religious and spiritual needs inspired Dalits to embrace Christianity. In the conversion of Dalits to Christianity, it can be said without any

hesitation that "the search for material improvement or enhancement of status is seldom if ever the sole or even the dominant motive ... Dignity, self-respect, fellow-human beings who will treat one as an equal, and the ability to choose one's own identity, all these are powerful incentives to conversion."³¹

Both in the past and continuing to the present day, embracing Christianity has focused Dalits' desire for socio-cultural, politico-economic and religious liberation and a rejection of the discriminatory caste hierarchy that kept them at the bottom of society and stigmatised their lives as non-human beings. Without Christianity, Dalits could never dream of coming out of their extreme degradation.³² This embraced-identity is being enriched and reinforced by the Lutheran teachings and which today offers the members of the Lutheran Communion in India the opportunities for an ever transformative and transforming identity.

VI). Identity Transformative – Lutheranism

The first Lutheran missionaries to India, especially to the AELC, whether they were from Halle in Germany or Pennsylvania in the United States, brought along with them the life-transforming message of the Gospel replete with pietistic undercurrents. Pietism was a reform movement within Lutheran confessional heritage which engulfed the Lutheran Church in Germany emphasizing the need for a practical Christian view and way of life reflecting faith in Jesus Christ rather than giving too much credence to doctrines and theology in the work and witness of Christian living.³³ These Lutheran missionaries with the pietistic heritage gradually lead the Christians of the Lutheran congregations in India not only to strive for spiritual

enrichment and religious renewal but also to endeavour to become aware of the social and educational issues. This kind of socio-economic and religio-spiritual renewal was introduced through the Lutheran teachings of *sola gratia, sola fide, sola scriptura, solus christus, soli deo Gloria, theologia crucis, deus absconditus, coram deo*, priesthood of all believers, bondage of the will, the two kingdoms, etc. This unique perspectival sharing of the Gospel offered a transforming identity not only to those who embraced Christianity spread by the Lutheran missionaries and later by the Gospel workers, and even today the same transforming identity reflects in the work and witness of the present day members of the Lutheran churches in India. This continuously reformative transforming identity is evident in the following teachings of the Lutheran Church in India.

A). The Lutheran *Trimukha Rakshana Mārga*: The Three '*solas*'³⁴

The Church in India exists amidst the plurality of religious philosophies and ideologies and social, cultural, economic and political complexities. And the teachings and doctrines of the majority religion, Hinduism with its claim of *Catur Vedas* (the Four Vedas, the Holy Scriptures) as *apaurusēyas* (not authored by human beings but were of divine creation) ingrained in the minds of the masses the evil practice of caste system as divinely ordained through its concepts of *karma* and *samsara*. The only way of attaining *moksa* (liberation from the unending cycle of births and deaths) from this 'ritually impure' status is possible only in the succeeding birth either through *Jñānamārga* (Path of Knowledge/Wisdom), or *Bhaktimārga* (Path of Devotion) or *Karmamārga* (Path of Duty) and following one of these *mārgas*

for liberation depends on the religio-spiritual temperament and capability of a person. As Dalits being ritually impure people by birth and not competent enough to choose either the *Jñānamārga* or the *Bhaktimārga*, the only *mārga* available to them is *Karmamārga*, that is performing one's assigned *dharma* (duty) in utter obedience and without questioning or complaining about the exploitative and dehumanising nature of the assigned duty.

Into this *dharma*-chained bonded-labour, and eschatological-dependent life-context of Dalit Christians, Lutheranism offered the *trimukha rakshanamarga* (three-dimensional path of liberation) —of *sola gratia*, *sola scriptura*, and *sola fide*. That is in one word, liberation from every life-threatening force is possible through the grace of the Creator God alone, through the life-giving eternal Word of God alone and through unwavering faith in Jesus Christ rather than through one's own merit and actions. Further, this radically vibrant and dynamically reforming identity is infused with a 'priestly' identity to Dalit Christians which hitherto was an anathema to the caste people and 'a pie in the sky' to Dalits themselves.

B). The *Pujāri* Identity

In the caste hierarchy and on the scale of purity-pollution of the four castes, the Brahmins, the pure *Āryans* declared themselves as *Bhūdevās* (gods on earth) and placed themselves at the helm of affairs of the society, both temporal and religious with access to learning and disposition of knowledge as their birth right; and further to impart the acquired knowledge to deserving pupils was their privilege. They monopolised the right to command and demand respect, as well as to enjoy

unquestioning loyalty, support and service from anyone and everyone. Even the Kings were to rule and could only rule by obeying to and accepting the guidance of the Brahmin priests. Thus the Brahmins elevated themselves to the top most status in the social and religious hierarchy, both as temporal and spiritual leaders. Religiously and socially branded as 'ritually impure' and hence, untouchables and polluting people, the Dalits were even denied and deprived of realising their religious aspirations through banned entry into temples and holy places and the curtailment of seeking religious services from the priests.

Into such a discriminated against religio-spiritual life condition of Dalits, Lutheranism offered a radically new doctrine of 'Priesthood of all believers', hither to an unthinkable and unimaginable teaching and concept for the Indian Dalits. Martin Luther, the Reformer of the Church in his treatise, *The Freedom of a Christian*, hoped that the term, 'priest' would become popular and common because for him justified by the grace of God through faith, every Christian believer is a priest. For Luther, God called every Christian, irrespective of one's profession or vocation, and according to his/her gifts to minister unto others – whether one is an untouchable cobbler who works with the skin of a dead animal or a woman who periodically carries menstrual pollution or an upper-caste intellectual who boasts of dispelling the darkness of ignorance of others through his/her gift of knowledge and wisdom. Every person's vocation is nothing but a call to priesthood, ministering unto others. In this radically new *Pujāri* (priestly) identity, the differences as man and woman, sacred and secular, ritually pure and ritually polluting, caste people and outcaste masses – all these are nailed to the Cross of Jesus and the human dignity of every individual as child of God and the *Pujāri* status of every human being is being restored and

this is one major step for Dalits in their weaning away from the institutionalised suffering imposed by caste. Mention of the suffering of Dalits, brings to the fore the contextual theological articulations of Dalit Christians that reflect their hope and aspirations in their Dalit Theology. However, one can also through the 'Theology of the Cross' of Martin Luther can understand the suffering of Dalits, and Lutheranism stands in solidarity in their quest for humanhood.

C). The Theology of the Cross

One of the Indian contextual theologies, *Dalit Theology* articulates the hope and aspirations of Dalits. Dalit theology is a 'Counter Theology' that challenged the classical Indian Christian Theology that employed some of the philosophical categories of the majority Hindu religion which were unintelligible and incomprehensible to Dalits. That is to say that the metaphysical articulations that are generous in the classical Indian Christian theology failed to offer any relief to the existential realities of socio-economic and religio-political disadvantages of Dalits. In fact, Dalit Christians did realise and has begun to experience that the Gospel message of Jesus Christ, with its dynamic and ever-flowing liberative streams quenches the spiritual thirst of the Dalits. God in Jesus Christ is ever present in the *pathos* and suffering of Dalits offering them liberation from caste-oppression and the accompanied dehumanization. Thus Dalit theology which is a contextual theology from 'below' is a theology of the Dalits, by the Dalits and for the Dalits and further it tries to be relevant to Dalits based on their existential reality of dalitness and strives to empower them in their struggle for restoration of their deprived human dignity, denied self-respect, robbed off

human equality and liberation from religiously sanctioned caste discrimination.

Even before the emergence of Indian contextual Dalit theology, believers in the Lutheran congregations were exposed to Martin Luther's 'Theology of the Cross'. Whether acknowledged or not, the 'theology of the Cross' of Lutheran Heritage in fact, offered the much needed impetus to the Dalits' view and way of understanding their new found faith in God and their hope and aspiration of a 'new tomorrow' and that God is a suffering and liberating God. God in his lowliness, through Jesus Christ on the cross hears to the cries of the suffering people and identifies with them.

In the theology of Cross, the believer understands the Church as the people of God, nurturing themselves on the faithfulness of God and sharing their gifts with his/her neighbour thereby moving into a wider community – ecumenism.

VII. Conclusion

Religion in Asia in general and India in particular is a vibrant force and for an average human being, religion is everything of his/her whole life – the very basis of social and cultural traditions, the life-regulating spring of ethical values and the provider and sustainer of life-enriching spirituality. With such an understanding, Dalits in India, who have been denied a life-fulfilling religion, have been actively searching for a metaphysical force that could provide inspirational dynamism, spiritual potential and moral strength, a force that could empower them to effectively fight caste-infused oppression and the resultant discrimination as well as achieving a holistic liberation and a new identity. And this some groups of Dalits found in Christianity.

Having embraced Christianity these Dalits never ever renounce their new faith, because it firmly remains as a liberating channel to achieve self-dignity and self-esteem by offering various avenues to fight against the caste-invoked humiliation. Conversion to Christianity has indeed become a tool for some Dalits to achieve and experience their long neglected and deliberately denied human rights, hope and aspirations. Christianity is helping them in their struggle to liberate themselves from the inherited disadvantages of socially ingrained inferiority complex, economic backwardness, political powerlessness and life-negating religious stigma of ritual pollution.

The Gospel message overwhelmingly reflects Jesus' love, healing and compassionate ministries, and His care and concern for the poor, oppressed and outcastes of the society, as well as His sacrificial death for the people 'outside the camp'. Some groups of Dalits identified themselves as the subjects and objects of this liberating, life-renewing and identity-offering message. Along with opening avenues to learn religious truths and to nurture their faith, Christianity in fact, through the opening and establishing of educational and other allied institutions, technical training programmes, health care centres and social development/welfare projects in and around Dalit localities has become a force that has been offering holistic liberation to the untouchables. Gospel message is helping and encouraging Dalits to raise their voices in protest and fight against the injustice being perpetrated by the caste system.

Added to this, the teachings of the Lutheran Church are enriching the identity of Dalit Christians. It is doubtless to say that for Dalit Christians in India, Lutheranism has been offering a new and solid hope of the possibility of change for a new way of

life endowed with freedom, self-respect, human dignity and a life-renewing and transforming identity. That is to say that the Lutheran teaching of the three *solas*, especially salvation/liberation through the grace of God, revealed in the Scriptures and offered through faith in Christ Jesus has also been reflected in a new identity. And the 'Priesthood of all Believers' is helping Christian Dalits from coming out of the religio-psychological feeling of being a ritually-polluted personality and the humiliating experience of being the lowest of the low as untouchables in the socio-religious hierarchy.

These ascriptions and appellations forcefully handed down for over three millennia are now being eroded with the powerful Gospel message and the Lutheran teachings of egalitarianism that advocates and emphasizes that every person being created in the Image of God is equal and thereby endowed with divine nature and is precious in the sight of God. And further, in the 'Theology of the Cross' the Dalits are experiencing a new '*ekklesia*' and with their interiorization of '*koinonia*', new relations of friendship/ brotherhood/sisterhood are emerging in a visible ecumenism. This new and transformed view and way of life is a result of their understanding of the existential reality of their life no more as 'no-people' but God's people which is a consequence of their recognition of the liberating presence of God in Jesus Christ in their very lives.

Jesus Christ as their anchor, Gospel message as their firm foundation and teachings of the Lutheran Church as channels refining and continuously re-defining their self-understanding, the Dalit Lutheran Christians have begun to re-write their own history and have begun to enjoy and take pride in a transformed and continuously transforming identity as children of God. Christianity and the Lutheran perspective have been offering this

new and unique identity. Thus Dalit Christians, especially, the Lutherans are no more a ritually-polluted untouchables whose touch and even shadow would pollute others, but rather human beings created in the image of God and hence, ritually pure. Dalits are called by God like any other human being for liberation through the grace of God, to minister unto others as the priests and to initiate a new *ecclesia*, *koinonia* and thereby a wider ecumenism.

Endnotes

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The eleven Lutheran churches in alphabetical order are, Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church (AELC), Arcot Lutheran Church (ALC), Evangelical Lutheran Church in Madhya Pradesh (ELC in MP), Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Himalayan States (ELCHHS), Good Shepherd Evangelical Lutheran Church (GSELCH), Gosner Evangelical Lutheran Church (GELC), Indian Evangelical Lutheran Church (IELC), Jeyapore Evangelical Lutheran Church (JELC), Northern Evangelical Lutheran Church (NELC), South Andhra Lutheran Church (SALC) and Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church (TELC)

² Leonard Fernando and G. Gispert-Sauch, *Christianity in India: Two Thousand Years of Faith*, New Delhi: Penguin Books India, Pvt. Ltd., 2004. P. 59.

³ Cyril Bruce Firth, *An Introduction to Indian Church History*, reprint, Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1983. Pp.14,

⁴ For more discussion, see Leonard Fernando and Gispert-Sauch, *ibid.*, pp.96-105.

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⁶ Daniel Jeyaraj, *Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg: the Father of Modern Protestant Mission, An Indian Assessment*. New Delhi and Chennai: ISPCK and GLTC, 2006. P.123

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¹⁴ T. Ganapati Sastri, ed., *The Arthasastra of Kautilya*, 3 Vols. (Trivandrum: N.p., 1952). P. 114

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¹⁶ See, *Census of India, volume 11* (New Delhi: Ashish Publishing House, 1982), p. 15, see Appendix I, Figure 1. And Census of India, Table A-series, 2011; Cf. T. K. Oommen, "Sources of Derivation and Styles of Protest: The Case of the Dalits in India," in *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, vol. 18, no. 1 (1984),

¹⁷ John C. B. Webster, "From Indian Church to Indian Theology: An Attempt at Theological Construction," in Arvind P. Nirmal, ed., *A Reader in Dalit Theology* (Madras: The Christian Literature Society, 1990), p. 27.

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³³ G.A. Oddie, *Hindu and Christian in South-East India* (London: Curzon, 1991), p. 159; the census data of 1991 reported the total number of Christians as 19,640,284 and of this there is a consensus that while at least half of them are from Dalit background, one fourth are from the ādivāsi communities and the rest from the upper castes. Cf. Joseph Taramangalam, *ibid.*, p. 269.

³⁴ For a detailed discussion see, Peter C. Erb, *Pietists: Selected Writings*, New York: Paulist Press, 1983; Philipp J. Spener, *Pia Desideria*, tr. & ed. by Theodore G. Tappert, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964

³⁵ The Five Latin phrases or slogans – *Sola Fide*, *Sola Scriptura*, *Solus Christus*, *Sola Gratia* and *Soli Deo Gloria* emerged as a result of the Protestant Reformation's fundamental theological principles to negate certain teachings of the Roman Catholic Church.

PRESENTATION 3

An Asian Response to the Western Idea of Proclamation and Mission –A Korean Case

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Introduction: Gravity Shift in World Christianity

We are in the midst of an incredible shift of the centre of gravity in world Christianity from the global North to the global South. Jenkins says, "Over the past century, however, the centre of gravity in the Christian world has shifted inexorably southward, to Africa and Latin America. Today, the largest Christian communities on the planet are to be found in those regions. If we want to visualize a "typical" contemporary Christian, we should think of a woman living in a village in Nigeria or in a Brazilian *favela*. In parts of Asia too, churches are growing rapidly, in numbers and self-confidence."¹ According to Andrew Walls, in 1800, well over 90% of Christians lived in Europe and North America, whereas in 1990 over 60% lived in Africa, South America, Asia and the Pacific, with that proportion increasing each year.⁽²⁾

Thus, it is clear that there is a change in the overall profile of the Christian Church worldwide. But what is less clear is why this has occurred. One possible explanation is that the rapid growth in population in the South compared to relative stagnation in the West has led to the change in the number of

Christians in each hemisphere. However, the statistics do not support this contention.(3) On the other hand, the growth of the Church in the South cannot simply be written off as being due to the influence of European colonialism.(4) Ultimately, the decline of the Church in the West and its success in the South must be related to the different reactions to the Gospel message of the respective peoples. Africans and Asians have accepted the Gospel in great numbers because they "came to believe the message offered, and found this the best means of explaining the world around them"(5) while the West has increasingly rejected the Gospel message in favour of other explanations. Lamin Sanneh's words aptly summarizes the present situation: "The contemporary confidence in the secular destiny of the West as an elevated stage of human civilization is matched by the contrasting evidence of the resurgence of Christianity as a world religion; they are like two streams flowing in opposite directions."(6) There is a divine aspect to this change. God is not bound to preserve individual Christian Churches or traditions for all time.(7) Rather He "goes where He's wanted."(8) We should also note that this shift in the centre of gravity is not an isolated phenomenon. Similar shifts have occurred in earlier periods of the Church's history.

This shift is also evident in the demographics of the world's Lutherans. A large portion of Lutherans are at best nominal adherents of the historic churches of Scandinavia, Germany, and the Baltic states, and these bodies are stagnant or declining. In contrast, membership is soaring in the upstart African churches, which together account for some 14 million Lutherans. Just between 2001 and 2003, membership of African Lutheran churches grew by 9 percent. The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, formed in 1959 with 20,000 members, grew to

over a million members by 1991, topped 4 million by 2003. It has enjoyed 15 percent per year growth rate for many years.(9) Since I am no expert in Asia, themes of my paper are concentrated on my country. By concentrating on the particular context instead of generalizing, however, I hope to hear sounds of echoes from the other regions of Asia, in either similar or dissimilar waves.

The aim of this paper is to see the relationship between the Western mission and indigenous assimilation, the two forces in mission. The most essential connecting link of the two forces is a translation of the Bible. The Bible is translated into the vernacular language with the result that the message of the Gospel transforms the minds of the people who listen to it. In this process people assimilate the message of the Gospel into their own context. This process of translation is intrinsic to the characteristic of the Gospel because of its translatability. I will first deal with the reciprocal encounters of the two forces witnessed from the early Protestant mission history in Korea. Then I will deal with another kind of translation, i.e., indigenization debate in the 1960s which was concentrated on the relationship between the Gospel message and the Korean culture. There is, however, a need for another kind of translation, namely, application of the doctrine of the justification by faith in the interpretation of the Bible. Furthermore, this doctrine needs to be contextualized in every new situation, also in this post-modern society. This aspect will be dealt with in the end.

I. Asian Context and Korean Context

Asia is a continent with multiple varieties of languages, races, religions, environment, histories, etc. Combining Asia and Pacific as one, Bachmann writes in 1989, "Asia and the Pacific together reveal the widest spread in racial and cultural diversity; from the aboriginals in the heart of Australia to the countless descendants of those ancient civilizations arising in the valleys of the Indus and Ganges in India and the Yellow River in China." (10) Concerning the spread of Christianity in the region, he further writes, "Asia is the least Christian continent in terms of numbers, the most magnetic in terms of its power to attract, and the most difficult in terms of its firmly-rooted religions. Here, except for work among peoples of Traditional religion, Christianity has succeeded in winning individuals but not in transforming a whole people of religion from within." (11) This general description does not appear to significantly have changed since then.

Korean Context

Korea is one of the few countries where Christian mission is not associated with Western colonialism. Catholicism was introduced into the country in 1785 and one hundred years thereafter Protestantism was introduced. Catholics had to suffer persecution from the government especially because of their refusal to ancestor worship. Protestants suffered under Japanese occupation (1910-1945) especially because of their refusal to *shintoisim*. Jenkin says, "Korean Christianity was born in blood." (12) The Protestant Church was to fill the vacuum of the people's mind during the period of political and social changes following the coerced opening of the country in the last period of

the Yi Dynasty in the end of the nineteenth century, and to share the lot of the people during the period of the Japanese occupation thereafter. It appears that Tertullian's words, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church," have proved to be true also for the Korean Christendom.

According to the census of 2005 the Protestants make up 18.3 percent, while the Roman Catholics 10.9 percent. (13) Presbyterian Church is the largest Protestant denomination followed by Methodists, Full Gospel Church, Holiness Church, etc.

Korean Christianity has a deep commitment to evangelism and mission work. Some 14,000 South Koreans are on mission overseas, a figure second only to the United States. (14) This is a good example of "South-South" mission. (15) One may enumerate diverse plausible causes for the rapid church growth within Korea. We may confidently say, however, that the Bible in vernacular language has played one of the most effective roles.

II. Two Forces in Mission: Historic Transmission and Indigenous Assimilation

In an article in 1983, "The Horizontal and Vertical in Mission: An African Perspective," Lamin Sanneh observes that historians of the nineteenth-century missionary move method failed to recognize that the missionary movement involved two distinct forces. He calls the first force the "historic transmission" of the gospel. This refers to the missionaries who brought the gospel to specific contexts. He says that this historical narrative championed by the missionaries has dominated the literature.(16)

The second force is what he calls the "indigenous assimilation." It is the force that, after receiving the gospel, adapts and applies it to the local context, sometimes in surprising ways. We should not, therefore, equate gospel transmission with gospel reception and assimilation because the latter often has transformed and empowered people in ways the missionary could not have anticipated. Sanneh particularly sees this evidenced in the Bible translation, which imbued the "local cultures with an eternal significance" in ways the missionary never imagined.(17) As the gospel was assimilated and internalized by those who received it, the Africans became the dominant players. Thus, one needs to see the whole process of the missionary movement from the arrival of the missionary to the point when the Africans themselves become preachers and missionaries. Taking the whole process into consideration, Sanneh can say that "the process of the historical transmission of Christianity under Western missionary agency should be subordinated to that of local assimilation."(18) In short, the missionaries set into motion a process of religious change in which the Africans themselves became the key player. Sanneh's interpretation from an African perspective seems to have implications for all Christian missions and for a general Christian theology of culture.(19)

III. Bible Translation

Sanneh keenly observes that in contrast to Islam, "Christianity is a translated religion without a revealed language."(20) Translating the Gospel was already set in process in the New Testament. As the "power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek

(Romans 1:16)", the gospel and thus Christianity is translatable – the ability to be "equally at home in all languages and cultures, and among all races and conditions of people." (21) This means that translation both assumes and confirms divine preparation preceding the missionary: "Nowhere else were missionaries more anticipated than in the field of scriptural translation . . . [where] we find evidence of deep and long preparation, in the tools of language as in the habits of worship and conduct, and in the venerable customs of the forebears."

1. Luther's Bible Translation into Vernacular Language

When talking about the Bible translation, we can begin with Luther's Bible translation into German. He rediscovered the Gospel through the meticulous study of the Scriptures. So he believed in the power of the Word of God, as he wrote "One little word shall fell him (the Prince of Darkness)" in "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God." Also well known is his reminiscence of the Reformation process told to his Wittenberg congregation, "I simply taught, preached, and wrote God's Word; otherwise I did nothing. And while I slept, or drank Wittenberg beer with my friends Philipp and Amsdorf, the Word so greatly weakened the papacy that no prince or emperor ever inflicted such losses upon it. I did nothing; the Word did everything." (22)

Luther translated the Old Testament in its entirety twice and the New Testament three times, "letting Abraham and Sarah, Moses, the prophets, the Apostle Paul and finally Jesus himself speak the Middle High German of Saxony." (23) Ultimately, *Sola Scriptura* principle that saw the Bible as the primary rule of faith took hold. Sanneh maintains that this

principle bore unexpected consequences for the development of Protestantism:

Sola Scriptura in fact left missionaries unsighted with respect to much in culture that was not directly related to Bible translation, and that prevented excessive interference with wider cultural processes. Commentaries and related bible aids, for example, were left out, and with them the Western intellectual tradition associated with the Enlightenment. Bible translation was a shelter for indigenous ideas and values.(24)

2. Bible Translation into Korean Language

Kyung-Bae Min, a noted Korean church historian, says, "The Protestant Church in Korea began with its overwhelming stress and propagation of the Bible." (25) He says also that The Catholic mission approach had been basically different from the Protestant method in that it was mainly concentrated on sacraments and Catholic doctrine. In 1876, nine years before the arrival of the first missionaries from the USA, Ung-Chan Lee, Seong-Ha Lee, Hong-Joon Baek, Jin-Ki Kim, and Ik-Se Lee were baptized in China. They helped the missionaries with translating the Bible into Korean. Ung-Chan Lee, a merchant from *Ui-Joo* City, became Christian while he was teaching Korean language to John Ross, the Scottish missionary to China (1842-1915). Lee and others helped Ross and his colleague John McIntyre (1837-1905) with translating portions of the Bible into Korean. Started in 1875, the translation of the Gospels of Luke and John was completed in 1882. The revision of the Gospel of Luke and the Acts appeared in 1883, the Gospels of Matthew and Mark in 1884, Romans, First Corinthians, Galatians, and Ephesians in 1885. In 1887 the whole New Testament was published. Soo-

Jung Lee, who was staying in Japan, translated the Gospels of Mark and Luke, respectively in 1884 and 1885. It is well-known that when Horace. G. Underwood (1859-1916) and Henry. G. Appenzeller (1858-1902), the first Protestant missionaries arrived in Inchon, Korea, on April 5, 1885, they had the Gospel of Mark translated by Lee in their baggage. In short, Koreans became Christians in the process of teaching Korean to the missionaries and then co-workers in Bible translation and also researchers of the Korean language. Hong-Joon Baek and Seong-Ha Lee began to spread the Gospels as colporteurs in Korea where the Christian mission was not yet permitted. We see here a prelude to the simultaneous combination of an awakening about the Korean language and the spread of the vernacular Bible which will be prevalent in the near future.(26)

This power of the Bible in vernacular language is well described in Sanneh's words, "Bible translation enabled Christianity to break the cultural filibuster of its Western domestication to create movements of resurgence and renewal that transformed the religion into a world faith."(27) John Ross foresaw the transforming power of the Bible, writing in 1884, "Korea is now moving forward to the direction of the religion which promises them the hope and faith that only the knowledge of the Bible and the Word of God is the power to rescue this people from death to life."(28) The same is evident in a report given a couple of years later by the British Foreign Bible Society, "A deep conviction of the authority and the value of the Bible prevails and the Korean has placed the Holy Scriptures at the very basis of its life."(29) About a decade later in 1908, Arthur T. Pierson wrote about the religious conditions of the people, "The conditions seem primitive and apostolic—the arousing of a whole people—a hunger for the Gospel—simplicity of faith and

piety—readiness to serve and suffer —universal and self-denying giving, and a constant and rapid conquest by the Gospel. Heathenism seems to take flight!”(30)

3. Preparation of the Vernacular Script, Hangul

Min writes, “It was only through the Bible translation that the long neglected language *Hangul* found its proper place and began to be recognized.”(31) *Hangul*, the Korean script, is a phonetic one, easy to learn. It consists of 14 vocals and 10 consonants, which, combined, can make more than 8,000 sounds. It was invented by the King Se-Jong the Great (reigned 1418-1450) in 1443, to help the populace who could not write Chinese characters, the only available script, in communication, even though they spoke Korean. Elites group refused to use *Hangul*, however, out of their sycophancy for China. So, it was still not in use when the first missionaries arrived in the end of the nineteenth century. The first missionaries were puzzled about the peculiar situation with the spoken or ear-language and the written or eye-language which are totally different from each other, as is witnessed from a book in 1897 by James Scarth Gale(1863-1937), a Canadian Presbyterian missionary to Korea, “Their speech too bears upon it the mark of the beast, for there are two different languages, where one easy one might serve. One is the written or eye-language, and the other is the spoken or ear-language. No one understands the eye-language when it is read, and no one thinks of writing the ear-language as it is spoken.”(32) Missionaries found it congruent with the spirit of their mission to aim at the general populace instead of the few elites who regarded Chinese as the only script. Gale could testify later in 1909, “This perhaps is the most remarkable providence

of all, this language sleeping its long sleep of four hundred years, waiting till the hour should strike on the clock, that it might rise and tell of all Christ's wondrous works..."(33)

One can sense the effect of the Bible translation in *Hangulin* the North Presbyterian Mission U.S.A. reports from 1910:

Twenty-five years ago the reading public was a group of literati, few in number and out of touch with the mass of the population. There were no books universally read, there were no readers among the lowly and uneducated. Today the whole land is reading, men and women and children: books are found in humble cottage: a great spirit of inquiry has taken place even the old women, who twenty years ago never dreamed that they too would spell out words, ...Today this change has come about and surely we may mark it one of the greatest wonders of modern missions. The Bible has come to meet the great cry of the human soul, ... has wrought wonders in changing the view-point and basal line of thought of this ancient people of the Orient.(34)

Once mastered the script, people "even demanded more to read."In this regard Min says, "It was the brilliant beginning of civilized modern Korea."(35)

Jeong-Shin Park emphasizes the sociological transformation that the vernacular translation of the Bible had caused. The society of the Yi Dynasty(1392-1897)was supported by the religion called 'Confucianism,' in which Religious and secular arenas were melted into one. The aristocratic class, called *Yangban* (兩班), had monopoly on the government posts, the only way to which was through Chinese. Chinese was the 'unique script' containing the 'unique word' which is the Confucian ideals. It was a script for cultural expressions and communication, public documents, and civil service

examinations. Reverence to the Confucianism was expressed even in the reverence to the Chinese characters. Meanwhile, *Hangul* was looked down on with contempt: it was called *Amgeul*(women's script), *Junggeul* (script of Buddhist monks), *Unmun* (low class's script), *Banjeol* (secondary script) in contrast to *Jinseo*(true script, 眞書) which is Chinese characters. Even ordinary people regarded it shameful or meaningless to learn *Hangul*. However, the Bible in *Hangul* played an important role in enhancing the value and authority of *Hangul*. Literacy rates among Christians were rising, because they had to read the Bible. This contributed to narrow the status gap between the *Yangban*(兩班) class and the *Sangmin* (the lower class people, 常民) and teardown the discrimination between men and women. Now equipped with the ability to read, ordinary people could get diverse knowledge that began to appear in diverse publications in *Hangul* and expand their perspectives beyond the boundaries of the country. The most important aspect is, however, that they began to question the validity of the prevailing Confucian order and form an alternative religious force, i.e., Christianity, and then strengthen it. Thus, using *Hangul* in place of Chinese characters was not limited to the area of the letters but was a great occasion for shaking the very root of the Yi Dynasty. (36)

IV. Indigenization Debate

In November 1934, Dr. Samuel A. Moffett(1864-1939), a missionary founder of the Presbyterian Church in Korea, noting the rise of theological liberalism in Korea, said these words to participants gathered to celebrate a jubilee, "Even though the Korea missionaries should all die or leave the country, let the

brethren of the Korean Church continue to preach the same Gospel as forty years ago..."(37) His plea did not hold very long, however, because indigenization discussion broke out in the 1960s among the Presbyterians as well as the Methodists.

With existential urgency some theologians began interpreting Christian truths in the contexts of the Korean religion and culture. They tried to interpret the message of the Gospel from the perspectives of traditional religious thoughts, and thus, sought a dialog between, even convergence of the two different traditions of the East and West by identifying similarities and dissimilarities between the two. They wanted to go further than the conventional theologizing that was mainly content with copying and imitating the Western theology.

Even though there had been individual attempts to compare Christianity to other traditional religions in the early period of the church (the most prominent figure was Byeong-Heon Choi, a Methodist pastor(1858-1927)), the indigenization debate broke out in earnest a decade after the Korean War (1950-1953). The word "indigenization" appeared first in "Theological Understanding of *Dangun* Myth -Brief Study on the Indigenization of the Creation Narrative" in the journal *Christian Thought* in December 1961 by Byung-Il Jang. It was, however, Tong-Shik Ryu (1922-), Jang's teacher at the Methodist Seminary who ignited the indigenization debate with the article, "The Indigenization of the Gospel and the Tasks of Mission in Korea." He differentiated the Gospel from the historical Christianity in that the former is a seed of the Christianity and the latter its plant blossoming in the Western culture. Applying Bultmann's demythologization to indigenization, he maintained that for indigenization one should get rid of the Western elements from Christendom. To do so, one should have an

understanding of the Korean history and culture into which one shall transplant the seed of the Gospel. One needs to understand Shamanism, Confucianism, Buddhism, and *Cheondogyo* (天道教), a Korean indigenous religion established in 1860, all of which have played distinct roles in Korean history and culture. Ryu maintained that studying these traditional religions was necessary not only to learn about the Korean mindset and religiosity, but also to be able to find the 'meaning of the Gospel' in those religions and have a dialog with people from these backgrounds. Finding 'Christians before Christ' in other religions, he maintained that the purpose of dialog with other religions is not to convert them to Christianity but to help them to find the 'meaning of the Gospel' and continue living as they have done.

Though Barthian, Seong-Beom Yoon (1916-1980) at the Methodist seminary, tried to find in the *Dangun* Myth (a Korean birth myth) the 'Vorverständnis of the Gospel' in the people's consciousness. He said via analogia that the three figures *Hwan In*, *Hwan Woong*, and *Hwan Geomin* in the myth are the same as the Christian Trinity: *Hwan In* is God the Father, *Hwan Woong* the Holy Spirit, and *Hwan Geom* God the Son. He tried to prove this by heavily allegorical reading of the Bible. Yoon's hypothesis was rejected by Gyung-Yeon Jeon, another Barthian who asserted that there are no similarities between Christianity and the *Dangun* Myth.(38) Chul-Ha Han pointed out that Seong-Beom Yoon and Tong-Shik Ryudo not see any differences between Christianity and other religions.

Nam-Dong Suh(1918-1984), a Presbyterian pastor and professor, was a representative *Minjung* theologian in Korea. His model is characterized by Kyung-Jae Kim as 'converging model,' which regards the salvation experience recorded in the scriptures as equal to the salvation experiences of *Minjung* (the

Massor *ochlos* who were the divested, marginalized, powerless people) in their life. He believed that the living God and the resurrected Christ are not confined to the tradition of the past or the Biblical scriptures, but rather is found in the suffering *Minjung*. Thus, he says, "The task of Korean *Minjung* theology in Korea is to testify to the *Minjung* tradition of Christianity in converging with the tradition of the Korean church in the form of *Missio Dei*." (39) Suh, known as Bultmannian, also highly praised *Wolli Kangron* (Divine Principle, 1957) written by Sun-Myung Moon, the founder of the Unification Church, saying that it deserves being regarded as the "best of the theological books produced by Korean theological circles in its quantity and system, and in its imaginative power and creativity" and that it "challenges other approaches and suggestions in its distinctive orientation on the Korean theology." Suh also finds in "the Christology of the *Wolli Kangron*" a new and innovative but adequate interpretation which is different from the traditional doctrinal theologies, with the only weakness that it doesn't converse with modern theology." (40)

Chai-Choon Kim (1901-1987), professor at a Presbyterian seminary, operated with the yeast and dough model (Mt 13:33, Lk13:20-21). The yeast is found and revealed in the power of the new being, Jesus Christ, a true man and a true God. The dough is the created world, i.e., the whole entity of nature and history, or in a more strict sense, the cultural-social reality of the non-Christian world. Kim is critical of the missionaries who "wanted to destroy the Buddhist statues and the rites of Confucianism as idol worship." He continues, "We do not regard other religions as products of demons, but as piece of God's word being worked out by the Holy Spirit. It is dim and not complete as if one sees it in a moonless night, but now it can be made clear and complete

in Christ."Kyung-Jae Kim calls Chai-Choon Kim's model "a tolerant fulfilment – theory which breathes with religious inclusivism." (41)

Contrary to Kim, Hyung-Nong Park (1897-1978) operated on the sowing model (Mk 4:1-32). It emphasized the absolute stance of the life-giving power of the seed. The seed in the sowing model was a "puritanic, reformatory, conservative, and orthodox theological system." (42) The soil was regarded as relatively neutral, barren, or desolate. As the soil passively receives the seed, the pagan culture of the land needs to passively receive the Gospel, i.e., Western theology, as is attested in these words of Park: "Passing on the true theology to a new generation exactly as we received it from the missionaries 80 years ago." (43)

Young-Jae Kim notes that many of the progressive theologians, who spoke about the indigenization of the Gospel in 1960s, revealed in the 1990s that the end of the indigenization theology was meant to be religious pluralism. (44)

Looking back to the indigenization debate in the 1960s and beyond, Deok-joo Lee is critical of the method of the many indigenization theologians. (45) He maintains that since most of those indulged in indigenization debate were systematic theologians, philosophers of religion, or theologians of culture, their theological method was mainly to compare and analyze the Western theological thoughts and Korean (or Oriental) religious thoughts by way of analogy. However, it ended up as 'comparative religious' interpretation and got characteristics of speculative enterprise transcending time and place, detached from the Church's contexts. Instead of the artificial methods to converge two traditions that are vastly different from each other in nature and characteristics, Lee argues, one should start from

the 'indigenized' religious and cultural contexts. Analyzing historically the indigenized forms of faith, one will be able to find the theology of the 'indigenized Church.' Consenting to Lee's focus on 'indigenized faith' instead of 'indigenizing theology,' I will introduce here some of his findings on aspects of the indigenized Protestant Church, mainly from the early mission history of Korea.

Indigenization started already in the translation of the Korean Bible. In the process of translation new indigenous words were created to express the Christian faith. And in the printing the traditional *Daedoobeob* (擡頭法) was applied. Thus, immediately after words like 'Lord,' 'Jesus,' and 'God' one space was left as an expression of reverence unlike other words that were written without space before and after, in line with the printing method of words like 'King' and 'Queen' in the government documents.

The first Korean Christians treated the Bible with reverence. The Bibles had to be put on the shelf lest children do any damage, and people always carried them with two hands when selling them. This 'scripture culture'(經典文化) is most evident in the Bible classes(查經會)which, in the early years, lasted at least one week up to one month. In 1908 Underwood writes about the enthusiasm of the Christians for the Bible classes, "Koreans walk several days to participate in Bible classes and easily endure difficulties. Usually 250 people or up to 1,180 people, at the largest, are gathered to study the Bible for fourteen days. After the Bible class they go back to their home villages and hold smaller size Bible classes. At a mission field in the northern area reportedly 192 times of smaller Bible classes were held with total participants of 10,000."(46)

The early Bible classes adapted the traditional method of learning at *Seodang* (書堂, village school): with the leader in the front participants recite the Bible one verse after the other. And the first step of learning was memorization. The Bible classes, too, began with Bible memorization. Accustomed to memorization, Koreans memorized portions of the Bible. For example, Sa-GyumBaek, a blind evangelist from *Gae-Sung* City, memorized the whole Gospels. This was an indigenization of the recitation and memorization practiced in the traditional religions.

Bible classes brought about revival. It is well known that Bible classes triggered the Great Revival that started in *Wonsan* City in 1903 and culminated in *Pyongyang* City in 1907. Through these revivals, people learned by experience that Christianity was different from traditional religions. The first generation Christians began to look at Christianity from an Eastern point of view. Deok-joo Lee maintains that their faith was neither pure Eastern or pure Western, but a third kind that combines the two.

Even though the exact time for the start of the early dawn prayer meeting cannot be given, there is no doubt that it was settled as a normal form of prayer meeting in the period of the great revival from 1903 to 1907. It is first mentioned in the American North Presbyterian Report of 1904 that in the beginning of that year participants in the *Pyongyang* Bible class had "sun-rise prayer and service" in the houses where they stayed. It was also reported that "in the early morning" in September 1904 students at *Ewha* were gathered in the chapel to pray in preparation for a revival meeting at the start of the new semester. People voluntarily held the early dawn meetings: they were not directed or recommended by missionaries to do so. Even before Christianity came, early dawn had been a time

for prayer for Koreans. When people received the Gospel, they prayed to God the Creator instead of to gods of heaven and earth (天地神明). The early dawn prayer meeting came to take root as a representative form of indigenous faith.

Another example of indigenization was *Tongseongkido* (通聲祈禱) or "Korean Prayer" translated as "audible prayer," "united audible prayer," or "prayer of unison" by missionaries. Their difficulty for finding appropriate English words for the prayer speaks for their puzzlement with it.

In the early church there was another type of offering called *Nalyeonbo* (日捐補, Day Offering) in addition to the offering of money and material. It was an adaptation of the *Poomassi* (communal sharing of labour) having deep roots in Korean agrarian society. Since the offering was consecrated "Time of God," people offered themselves in evangelization, mostly during Bible classes or revival meetings. Started in the Northern part of the country, it soon spread to the whole country. "Day Offering" combined with evangelization using *Jjokbogeum* (individual Gospels) was representative method in "Million Souls Movement," which started in 1909. Different from Bible colporteurs (*Gwonseoin*, 勸書人 or *Maesoein*, 賣書人) and *Jeondoboooin* (傳導婦人, Bible women) who were employed to sell the Bible and evangelize, these unpaid voluntary evangelists reached every nook and cranny of the country, which speaks for a rapid spread of the Gospel in the early Church.

Another example of indigenization is *Seongmeewoondong* (誠米運動, Rice Offering). Church women gave regular offerings of rice to the church in addition to money to support indigenous evangelists or Bible women (傳導婦人), which reflects the church's will to self-support. Housewives used to put a little bit of rice or other grains in a pot in the kitchen at each meal

preparation in order to use them for making rice cake or to sell them for expenses for ancestral rites. They also attended a jar called *Seongjoo Danji* (*Sungjoo Pot*) or *Shinjoo Danji* (*Shinjoo Pot*) dedicated to *Seongjoo*, the most terrible one of the many home site guardian gods attached to many parts of house. Having become Christians, they now changed the name of the "*Sungjoo Pot*" into "*Lord's Pot*" and saved portions of rice for the sake of Christ.

Lee concludes that these kinds of indigenized forms of faith eg. early dawn prayer meeting, Korean Prayer, Day Offering, Rice Offering, etc. --played an essential role in shaping the character of the Korean Church. This was the natural results of an active assimilation of the Gospel by the indigenous people. In 1890s the missionaries applied to the mission field the Nevius Method with the three main purposes: "Let the Koreans themselves evangelize their countrymen" (self-propagation), "Let the Koreans themselves be economically responsible for the operation of the church"(self-support), "Let the Koreans themselves govern the church"(self-government). Passing through the great revival, the 'Three-Self' principles became actualized in indigenized forms, that is, 'Day Offering' made possible 'self-propagation', 'Rice Offering', 'self-support', and based on these, Korean churches became independent from American churches in 1905 (Methodist Church) and 1907 (Presbyterian Church).

V. Contextualization with the Lutheran Teachings, Contextualization of the Doctrine of Justification

The Bible in vernacular language has shaped the minds of many Koreans for the last 129 years' history of the Protestantism. The number of the Christians also has increased.

As said above, the Protestants made up 18.3 percent of the total population in 2005. However, this percentage is a slightly decreased one in comparison to 1995. Moreover, this only seems to be a symptom of many problems which the Protestant Church is facing, and for which it is criticized from inside and outside. That is why one can often hear the urgent call to go back to the Reformation heritage.

When starting the mission work in 1958, the Korean Lutheran Mission, formed by missionaries sent by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, set a mission strategy to serve the entire church rather than establishing another denomination to compete with other denominations, which strategy has not changed significantly until today. With its small size, I think, the best thing the Lutheran Church in Korea can contribute to the entire church with is the doctrine of justification by faith alone with many other teachings related to it.

The problem is, however, that the justification often sounds like mantra without any special distinction, which is expressed in the following irony story by Klaus Schwarzwäller: At the famous London Ciba Symposium of Nobel prize winners half a century ago, Albert von Szent-Györgyi reported that the further his Massachusetts team progressed in their research on muscles, the less they knew about the muscle itself; they were even in danger, he said, of "loosing" it. Perhaps something similar has happened with the article of justification in Protestant theology.(47)

One may sense the same kind of sentiment expressed in the words of "Justification Today," circulated at the General Assembly of the Lutheran World federation in Helsinki in 1963, the year which is not far from the time of the above mentioned London Ciba Symposium:

The Reformation witness to justification by faith alone was the answer to the existential questions: "How do I find a gracious God?" Almost no one asks this question in the world in which we live today. But the question persists: "How do I find meaning for my life?" When man seeks for meaning in his life he is impelled to justify his existence in his own eyes and before his fellow men. He then proceeds to judge his fellow men by these same standards. This is why men are confident of their own accomplishments and avid for recognition and fame. It also explains why there is so much mutual accusation and condemnation. Do men not all compulsively pursue dreams of the future which they expect will give vitality to their lives? (48)

Against this background it was a surprise that the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* was signed in Augsburg in 1999 by representatives of the LWF and the Vatican. Theodor Dieter thinks, however, that even though the doctrine's motto as "the article by which the church stands or falls" is taken as an unquestioned and unexamined authority in many Lutheran circles, the doctrine is not seriously dealt with. It seems to be the case in Korea, too. The three *salas* often do not sound more than slogans without deep meaning. In the same vein I often joke, "In our church there are only talks about the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the Supper while Christ's body and blood are not really present." So we have double challenges. One challenge is to overcome the Western (and perhaps our own) indifference to the doctrine of justification. The other challenge is to contextualize the doctrine in our own context. This is a perennial issue, as Rodewald maintains: "contextualization. . . at least for confessional Lutheran Christians, can never be a realized goal but remains always an ongoing process." (49)

I will deal with these two aspects with illustrations of two recent episodes that happened in Korea. First, the notion that modern men and women are only interested in this life and its 'meaning' can be refuted by the words of Yoon-Nam Kim who is the mother-in-law of Kun-Hee Lee, the CEO of the Samsung conglomerate. A devout believer of the *Won Buddhism*, an indigenous modern branch of Korean Buddhism, she did many philanthropic activities when she lived. Before she died in 2013, she used to say, "The only thing that I can take along with me when I will die is *jeokgong* (積功, accumulated merits)." (50) These words reveal both her belief in the afterlife and in the connectedness between this life and afterlife by way of goods works. The consciousness in this connectedness is shared by many people, even by Protestants influenced by *kibogshinang* (祈福信仰, health and wealth Gospel) that permeates traditional religions in Korea. The works righteousness is, however, ultimately self-serving. It is a hindrance to faith in God's gracious action through Christ's death and resurrection (*sola fide* and *solus Christus*). The need for contextualization of *sola gratia* is evidenced from the words printed on the banner, "I will pay for your grace," put up by Jung-Hyun Lee who won the parliament election in his district last summer. The daily unconscious use of this oxymoron both reveals how people think of 'grace' and imprint show they should think of it. These two episodes betray that basic teachings of the Reformation are not yet deep-rooted in Korean soil, which situation calls for the necessity of contextualization in addition to appropriation and re-appropriation of the Reformation heritage.

In this context, I deem it appropriate to enumerate the affirmations of the doctrine of justification introduced by Mark C. Mattes. It can be seen as (a) wholly for the sake of Christ and

his righteousness, (b) by virtue of the imputation of this righteousness through the forgiveness of sin for our benefit, (c) through the faith that receives this forgiveness, not as a new quality in us but as a laying hold of the gracious promise, (d) happening as an instantaneous act and not gradually, (e) offering a renewal of life based on this forgiveness, (f) bound to the proper distinction between law, which brings an end to the old being, and the gospel, which creates the new. Correlated with these affirmations is the discernment that as saving, God is a promising God. We must discern God as "preached," in which goods (being for us, providing for us, forgiving sin, etc.) from God are delivered, from God "not preached." We must, therefore, discern God "as revealed," even in the darkness of Jesus' death on the cross, from God as "hidden," masked in various forms in creation.(51) These affirmations show that the doctrine of justification has many facets, as is expressed aptly by Klaus Schwarzwäller: "this 'article' is not an 'article' at all like the others but rather is the very kernel of theology." (52) In the same spirit Mark C. Mattes says that the "justification *sola fide* is not a sectarian but a wholly catholic doctrine."

Conclusion

Scott Hendrix writes in his book that the sixteenth-century Reformers thought they were replanting authentic Christianity in the vineyard of the Lord, that is, in the same European Christendom, which they believed, had been devastated by the medieval church. Thus, they set for themselves the "goal of Christianizing Christendom." Luther's goal, too, was to provide a religious environment in which believers would develop as fully as possible into what he calls the "real Christians" described in

Freedom of a Christian—free through faith to serve others in love. This is depicted in a painting by Lucas Cranach the Younger in Wittenberg in around 1556. Using the parables in Isaiah 5:1-7 and Matthew 20:1-16, he portrays the medieval clergy and Lutheran reformers as labourers in the vineyard of the Lord. The vineyard is split down the middle. On the left side, the vineyard has withered from neglect and mismanagement by the pope and his clergy. On the right side, the vineyard is flourishing under Lutheran cultivation: eight reformers clear the land and prune and irrigate the new, healthy plants.(53)

Observations by Hendrix are only another proof of the validity of the phrase, "*Ecclesia Semper Reformanda*." This may apply not only to the Western churches but to the mission churches, especially when we think about the rapid changes undergoing both on the global and local planes due to technology, globalization, international politics, high-speed travel, exchange of ideas, secularism, post-modernism, etc. Added to the need of adaptation to these changes is the unchanging mandate to pass on the basics of the Gospel to new generation, as is exemplified in Luther's *Small Catechism*.

In addressing to people from other religious or secular background and to new generation, we need to speak new languages to deliver the 'meta-language' of justification.(54) In so doing, it might be helpful if we spoke the language of the heart to the people living in an "*Erlebnisgesellschaft*, or experience-based society," where people are talking about an EQ, an emotional quotient and a 'social competence,' in addition to an IQ, an intelligence quotient. Arguing that Luther's work is a striking balance of *intellectus et affectus*, an "erudition of the heart," Birgit Stolt tells her observation, "Our modern separation of feeling from thinking is, perhaps, a serious impediment to

understanding Luther.”(55) She affirms that “Luther –at least as he is portrayed in Sweden today –is altogether too harsh and stern.”(56) This Swedish experience of Luther seems to be shared by Americans, “North Americans are apt to find talk about doctrine cold and impersonal.”(57) It is, therefore, a challenge to preachers and theologians to fully appreciate “the attitude of joy and thankfulness” which is “an important part of Lutheranism,”(58) and to redirect the theological formation which has been focused on acquiring intellectual knowledge in an effort to be seen as an academic discipline at the university. This challenge can be confidently met with the support of the words of Stolt, “Luther’s experience-based spirituality may be one of the most relevant dimensions of his word to us today.”(59)

Questions:

1. Does the “two forces in mission: historic transmission and indigenous assimilation” described above apply to your context, too? If so, in what ways?
2. How is the message of the Bible shaping the members in your church? What concrete measures is your church taking to promote the Bible reading by the people who are occupied with Internet, Facebook, smart-phones, Twitter, blogs, DVDs, etc?
3. How are the Lutheran Confessions used in the Bible interpretation in your context?
4. What aspect(s) of the doctrine, “Justification by faith alone,” do you think are most relevant for your context?
5. What aspects do you think are most necessary to be revised or complimented in the present theological formation and education in your context?

Endnotes

- 1 Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1-2. Sanneh contrasts Africa and Europe and North America in terms of the church membership: "By 1985 there were over 16,500 conversions a day in Africa, yielding an annual rate of over 6 million. In the same period some (i.e., between 1970 and 1985), some 4,300 people were leaving the Church on a daily basis in Europe and North America." Lamin Sanneh, *Whose Religion is Christianity? The Gospel beyond the West*. (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 15. See also page 41.
- 2 Andrew F. Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission and Appropriation of Faith*(NY, Maryknoll: Orbis, 2004), 31.
- 3 Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*, 103ff.
- 4 Ibid., 64.
- 5 Ibid., 52.
- 6 Lamin Sanneh, *Whose Religion is Christianity?*, 3.
- 7 Andrew F. Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History*, 13.
- 8 Philip Yancey. Quoted in Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*, 19.
- 9 Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*, 242.
- 10 E. Theodore Bachmann and Mercia Brenne Bachmann, *Lutheran Churches in the World: A Handbook* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 147.
- 11 Ibid.,149.
- 12 Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*, 53.
- 13 <http://news.donga.com/3/all/20060615/8318472/1>. Accessed on Oct. 1, 2014.
- 14 Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*, 83
- 15 Ibid, 24.
- 16 Lamin Sanneh, "The Horizontal and Vertical in Mission: An African Perspective," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*7, no. 5 (October 1983): 165-171. Malcolm C. Fenwick(1863-1936), Canadian missionary to Korea, had a different attitude about his role as missionary. It was taken for granted among the missionaries that a missionary was a new man in Jesus Christ, wise unto salvation, with a fair working knowledge of the Bible and passion for souls; and when he has somewhat mastered the language, custom and people, he was usually considered ready for work for immediate success. Fenwick affirmed that it was the beginning of mistakes. Malcolm C. Fenwick,

The Church of Christ in Corea (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1911), 52. 17
Ibid., 166.

18 Ibid., 170.

19 See also Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*, 64-65.

20 Lamin Sanneh, *Whose Religion is Christianity?*, 97.

21 Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*(NY, Maryknoll, Orbis, 1989),51.

22 WA 10/3:18-19; LW51:77.

23 James Arne Nestingen, "Luther's Cultural Translation of the Catechism," *Lutheran Quarterly*15/4(Winter 2001), 440.

24 Lamin Sanneh, *Whose Religion Is Christianity?*, 109

25 Kyung-Bae Min, *A History of Christian Churches in Korea*,132.

26 Jeong-Shin Park, "Christianity and Hangul Movement" in *Christianity and Korean History*(Seoul: Yonse University Press, 1997),47, 55.

27 Lamin Sanneh, *Whose Religion Is Christianity?*, 130.

28 Quoted in Kyung-Bae Min, *A History of Christian Churches in Korea*(Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 2005),125.

29 *The Annual Report of the British Foreign Bible Society*, Vol. 92-93, 1896-1897, 242. Quoted in Kyung-Bae Min, *A History of Christian Churches in Korea*, 133.

30 Quoted in Kyung-Bae Min, *A History of Christian Churches in Korea*,125. 31

Kyung-Bae Min, *A History of Christian Churches in Korea*,133.

32 James S. Gale, *Korean Sketches* (Chicago, New York, Toronto: Flemming H. Revell Company, 1897), 246-247.

33 James Scarth Gale, *Korea in transition* (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1909), 137-138.

34 *The Report of the Board of the Foreign Missions Presbyterian Church in U.S.S.*, 1910, 296-297. Quoted in Kyung-Bae Min, *A History of Christian Churches in Korea*, 134.

35 Kyung-Bae Min, *A History of Christian Churches in Korea*,133.

36 Jeong-Shin Park, "Christianity and Hangul Movement" in *Christianity and Korean History*(Seoul: Yonse University Press, 1997),67-69. (in Korean)

37 Samuel A. Moffet, "Chosun gyohoie giham"(A Plea to Korean Church), *Jonggyoshibo (Religious Signal)* (1934, 10), 10. Translated from a quotation in The Institute of Korean Church History Studies, *A History of Korean Church*, Vol. II (1919-1945), (Seoul: The Christian Literature Press, 1990), 246.

38 Young-Jae Kim, *Korean Church History*(Seoul: Jireh Publishing Company, 2004), 300.

39 Nam-Dong Suh, "Converging of Two Stories," *Minjung and Minjung Theology*, 1982, 255. Quoted in Kyoung-Jae Kim, *Christianity and the Encounter of Asian Religions: Method of Correlation, Fusion of Horizons, and Paradigm Shifts in the Korean Grafting Process* (Zoetermeer, The Netherlands: Boekencentrum, 1994), 132.

40 Young-Jae Kim, *Korean Church History*, 296-302.

42 Aaron P. Park, *Where is Conservative Theology Going?*(1985), 190, 218. Quoted in Kyoung-Jae Kim, *Christianity and the Encounter of Asian Religions*, 121. Aaron P. Park is Hyung-Nong Park's son.

43 Hyung-Nong Park, *Dogmatic Theology*, Vol. 1(1964), introduction. Quoted in Kyoung-Jae Kim, 121.

44 "Evaluation of the Indigenization Debate in Korean and Its Prospects," *Christian Thought* (June 1991): 78-100, (July 1991): 75-94. (in Korean) Participants are Tong-Shik Ryu, Byung-Moo Ahn, Seon-Hwan Byun, Gwang-Seun Seo, Kyoung-Jae Kim, and Jong-Cheon Park.

45 Deok-jooLee, "Formation of An Indigenized Korean Church in the Early Period and Its Religious Culture –A Historical-Theological Approach to the Indigenization Theology" (in Korean), *Shinhaggwa Segye* (June 2004), 168-193.

46 H. G. Underwood, "Korea's Crisis Hour," *The Korea Mission Field*, Sep. 1908. Translated from a Korean quotation in Deok-joo Lee, "Formation of An Indigenized Korean Church in the Early Period and Its Religious Culture," 176.

47 Klaus Schwarzwäller, "Foreword," in Mark C. Mattes, *The Role of Justification in Contemporary Theology*(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), x.

48 *Proceedings of the Fourth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation Helsinki, July 30 to August 11, 1963* (Berlin and Hamburg: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1965), 478. Quoted in Theodor Dieter, "Why Does Luther's Doctrine of Justification Matter Today?" in *The Global Luther: A Theologian for Modern Times*, ed. Christine Helmer (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 190.

49 Mike Rodewald, "Barriers to the Gospel: Approaching Contextualization from a Confessional Lutheran Perspective," *Missio Apostolica* 22/1(2014), 60.

50 *Chosun Ilbo*(Daily Newspaper), June6, 2014.A29.

51 Mark C. Mattes, *The Role of Justification in Contemporary Theology*, 16.

52 Klaus Schwarzwäller, "Foreword," in Mark C. Mattes, *The Role of Justification in Contemporary Theology*, x.

53 Scott H. Hendrix, *Re-cultivating the Vineyard: The Reformation Agendas of Christianization* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), xvi, 37. WA 10/2, 38, 1-13; LW36:264.

54 The concept is coined by Gritsch and Jenson. Eric W. Gritsch and Robert W. Jenson, *Lutheranism: The Theological Movement and Its Confessional Writings*(Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 42-43.

55 Birgit Stolt, "Luther's Faith of 'the Heart'," in *The Global Luther: A Theologian for Modern Times*, ed. Christine Helmer (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 149, 137.

56 Ibid., 145.

57 Mark C. Mattes, *The Role of Justification in Contemporary Theology*, 185.

58 Birgit Stolt, "Luther's Faith of 'the Heart'," 145.

59 Ibid., 150.

PRESENTATION 4

A Biblical and Theological Perspective of Family – An Asian Lutheran Perspective

(By: Dr Wilfred J Samuel -Sabah Theological Seminary, Malaysia)

[Joshua 24:15. "As for me and my family, we will serve the Lord."]

1. Introduction

I would like to begin by saying that "Family" perhaps represents the simplest form of an institution or social entity, which is intrinsically connected to many fundamental sociological attributes and features. However in the context of a Christian "Family", we too affirm the need for a religious and ethical framework, which would determine and truly reflect a Christian witness. Hence, writing from the Asian Lutheran Christian perspective, the role of the Bible will continue to remain a fundamental source for a meaningful discussion on what is expressly understood and articulated in the discussion on what is a Christian "Family". The reason I make mention of this is because today there are many sociologists and theologians, who deliberately choose to focus exclusively on socio-cultural factors that shape family structures and processes; without making any reference or in some cases only making a casual reference to the Bible. To further illustrate the expressed biblical principles relating to "Family", we would also needs to consider the views

expressed in Luther's writings and the Lutheran Symbols to further enhance the stated theological viewpoints.

In the late 20th century and early 21st century, this issue concerning "Family" had generated profound interest and had led to extensive publication of literature in the West; mostly in the context "Same Sex Marriage". But in the Asian context, I believe revisiting the topic on 'Family' from a contextual theological and pastoral perspective would be vital to help us not only uncover negative assumptions, that hinder a holistic understanding of the "Family", but also allow us to reaffirm a biblically consistent framework. It would only seem obvious that as we discuss the topic on "Family", vis-à-vis its nature, relational characteristic and structure, we would inevitably need to touch on two related sections, marriage and sexuality.

2. Definition and Purpose of a Family – To Love and Serve

Family is generally defines as a "fundamental social group in the society typically consisting of one or two parents and their children.(1) Or as the Webster Dictionary describes, "The collective body of persons who live in one house, and under one head or manager; a household, including parents, children, and servants, and, as the case may be, lodgers or boarders."(2) Or as the New Dictionary of Culture explains, it is "A basic social unit consisting of parents and their children, considered as a group, whether dwelling together or not."(3) The basic and pervasive notion of parents (male and female) having children and living as a household within a social entity is a common definition of a family. But this would not mean those who chose to remain single or those who are unable to produce children of their own and members of the extended family could not be included into the family category. As biblical scholars note, "two Hebrew

words “mishpachah” and “bayith”, describe the family institution in the Old Testament. “*Mishpachah* has a wider application and includes the larger patriarchal clan. A patriarchal clan would include those persons related by blood, marriage and slaves (on occasions including strangers) Exodus 20:10 . On the other hand *bayith* was applied in a context to suggest a place of residence or commonly understood as the immediate household but could also include descendants as organized body (4) (Genesis 18:19). Hence, the immediate family is described as the nuclear family, while the extended family would include grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins etc. A meaningful relationship within the extended family would be equally rewarding as is the case with the nuclear family.

Speaking from an Asian context, either nuclear family or extended family, both continue to remain central to contemporary life, despite the fact that significant changes have taken place in the post-modern era; which has brought new damaging challenges to its structure. Despite those challenges, the relevance of marriage and purpose of a family in offering a social environment, where companionship, security and mutuality either expressed and learned, remains more so because it is a God ordained institution. Jesus speaks on the sanctity of marriage and against frivolous divorce in Matthew 19:4-6. ***When Jesus quoted this verse He was establishing the fact that it was God's intention to have the two to come together and to stay together for life.***

So Luther writes, “God has therefore most richly blessed this estate above all others and, in addition, has supplied and endowed it with everything in the world in order that this estate might be provided for richly and adequately...For it is of the highest importance to him that persons be brought up to serve

the world, promote knowledge of God, godly living, and all virtues, and fight against wickedness and the devil.”(5) Elsewhere in the Apology a similar point is emphasized, “The union of a man and woman is by natural right. Natural right is really divine, because it is an ordinance divinely stamped on nature.”(6) Both the biblical notion and Lutheran position underscores the notion that beginning from a husband and wife relationship and leading to the formation of a family, it readily connects individuals of the family into the societal fabric wherein people live in relationship and provide mutual help. This is viewed as a spiritual duty. Therefore as Jenny indicates, “we ought to acknowledge that since the origin of civilization, human beings have lived in families, groups or tribes in order to enhance physical, emotional, spiritual and communal support. A close family bond is like a safe harbor, where we feel secure and where we trust that we have someone always there to whom we could turn to when we need them the most.”(7) Admittedly then, family remains an important part of our daily living in helping improve, support and shape our life. It is here that good values and life skills are nurtured in providing us with the necessary tools for maturity and development; admittedly this is part of God plan and providence. However, I should say that the concept of family has undergone transformations and changes, over the years, which has led to the breakdown in family structures and communal sentiments. However, I suppose the essence of being in a family has generally survived through the ages.

On the other hand, life in families could also add pain and become burdensome depending on how individuals in the family manage relationships. A healthy marriage would certainly transform and impact a family positively and turn it into a

valuable resource, whereas, unhealthy and dysfunctional marriages could lead serious relational problems for the immediate family and community in general. The Apology drawing reference to Augustine's explanation on concupiscence draws our attention to the human fallen nature and human weakness as reasons for lack of fear of God, evil inclinations and higher capacity to carnal attitudes, which consequentially lead to broken relationships. "Since nature in its weakness cannot fear and love God or believe in Him, it seeks and loves carnal things." (8) Hence, we affirm that the Bible must be brought into sustaining a healthy marriage and family relationships and allow God to guide in the formation of healthy family and society. This is also reiterated by Luther: "Therefore let everybody know that it is his chief duty, on pain of losing divine grace, to bring up his children in the fear and knowledge of God, and if they are gifted to give them opportunity to learn and study so that they may be of service wherever they are needed." (9) To him this is a divinely entrusted authority and responsibility to ensure proper upbringing of good natured children: "Most certainly father and mother are apostles, bishops, and priests to their children, for it is they who make them acquainted with the gospel. In short, there is no greater or nobler authority on earth than that of parents over their children, for this authority is both spiritual and temporal." (10) In another place Luther warns parents, "Think what deadly harm you do when you are negligent in this respect and fail to bring up your children to usefulness and piety...Because of the way we train them, we have unruly and disobedient subjects." (11)

The value God places in the family is noted in God using the family to illustrate the relationship between God and the believers. Charles Hodge notes, *"The Church is everywhere*

represented as one. It is one body, one family, one fold, one kingdom. It is one because pervaded by one Spirit. We are all baptized into one Spirit so as to become one body, says the apostle.”(12) Hence, Christianity places utmost importance on the nature, structure and purpose of the family.

3. God is a Relational Being – Importance of Establishing Right Relationships

Most theologians would concur that the theme of the *imago Dei* occupies a central position in the creation narrative vis-à-vis the creation of the man and woman (cf. Gen. 1:26f; 5:1-3; 9:6). It denotes the fact that the mystery of humanity cannot be grasped apart from the mystery of God, especially as we reflect on the theme of family and relationship. Hence we note that the creation account in Genesis vividly makes it clear that human beings are not created as isolated individuals: “God created mankind in his image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them” (Gen. 1:27). The theological implication remains that human beings are called to exist in relationship with God, which then becomes reflected in the marriage relationship between a male and female person. Beginning with marriage, different kinds of relationships are then established. Hence human beings are never viewed as living in isolation but essentially being in a relationship. We agree that the character of the *imago Dei*, beyond its ontological (13) character, also constitutes the call and basis for **proper relationships** on earth. There are five fundamental pillars: love, peace, justice, freedom and responsibility. Arriving at the New Testament we take note that Christ, who is the perfect image of God (2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15; Heb 1:3), manifests His Lordship over

sin, death and devil in order to restore our relationship with the Father. This then become affirmed and visualized through the Sacraments with the expressed notion that "we are embraced in love by the Father". One may also want to theologically assess the view that God is a relational being from the point of the Trinitarian doctrine. It is a historically attested position of the church that the perfect triune relationship of God, the relationship of Christ and his bride, and the relationship of Christ to humanity through the power of the Holy Spirit is a model for **reasonable and right** human relationships. It is to say that our belief in a God who is Triune and whose characteristics are responsibly relational and love encompassing, certainly has a direct and practical consequence for our Christian living. We are called to established and practice right and responsible relationships which are God honoring, biblically consistent and promotes quality witness in fulfilling our missional mandate. In other words we affirm that God is intensely relational within the Godhead and His creation; it underscores our purpose as people who live in a community and our need to establish and maintain right and responsible relationships. Hunter notes, "Therefore, the first natural union of human society is the husband and wife. God did not create even the these separate individuals and join them together as if they were alien to each other, but created the one from the other."(14)

4. The Created as Male and Female – Affirming the Divine Purpose

One of the key issues rocking the Christian world today is the question and response to the "same sex marriage". What does created as male and female mean within the context of

marriage, family and sexuality? In Asia one of the recent countries to see a strong lobby to liberalization is Taiwan.

"Christians who supported the alternative family formation amendment were present at the event where Coalition for the Happiness of our Next Generation staged a protest against the amendment. The Taipei Association for the Promotion of Women's Rights along with other women's groups and law school students also held a press conference at the Legislative Yuan to support the legalization of same-sex marriage. The association's Chairman Liu Chia-yi said that based on the principles of gender equality, people of different sexual orientations should be treated equally, so therefore the Legislative Yuan should pursue the legalization of same-sex marriage as soon as possible, which will allow everyone to enjoy the right to marry legally.(15)

Similar voices and groaning could be heard from other countries as well. A much deeper issue in this debate is the question of sexuality and purpose. Hence, we begin the discussion by drawing attention to the sub-theme on sexuality while keeping in mind that our wider concern is the Christian family. **We agree and affirm that man and woman were created as equals; in worth, dignity and honor associated with the image of God.** Luther writing on the estate of marriage in 1522, underscores a vital point right at the very beginning of the document, that, "The man is not to despise or scoff at the woman or her body, nor the woman the man. But each should honor the other's image and body as a divine and good creation that is well-pleasing unto God Himself."(16) While we affirm that functionally, God created men and women with distinct but complementary roles, so that they would be able to perform and

maintain meaningful relationships within the community. He also asserts the fact that Genesis 1:27 ought to be interpreted as "that God divided mankind into two classes, namely male and female, or he and a she."(17)

The same is affirmed by Jesus in Matthew 19:4-6

- ***He who made them at the beginning "made them male and female***
- ***Be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh:***
- ***What God has joined together***

Here we note God's acknowledgment of man and woman as male and female; two distinct nature in terms of sexuality. Hence Galatians 3:28 is in no way to be assumed as an abolishment this gender distinctions. "This initial divine appraisal of human sexuality as "very good" shows that Scripture sees the male/female sexual distinction as part of the goodness and perfection of God's original creation."(18) Commenting on Galatians 3:28, Richard Longenecker notes, "Three couplets representing three areas of inequality are set in v.28, with the inequalities of each of these areas emphatically stated as having come to an end for believers in Christ."(19) We agree with Richard Longenecker that the Galatian text was purposed to remove false social or economic stigmatic assumptions attached to the simple identification of an individual as a slave, free man, Jew, Gentile, male or female, without lending support to homosexual arguments. Hence, Paul in Ephesians 5:31, calls marriage a great mystery which amplifies the connection between Christ and the Church. Andrew Lincoln in his commentary on Ephesians 5:31, which rejecting the claim for sacramental consideration of marriage, highlights the fact that "There can therefore be no question of a sacramental interpretation...but there do remain questions about the special

relationship between human marriage and the redemptive sphere of Christ's relationship with His Church."(20)

In other words, the husband's loving headship towards his wife and the wife's loving relation to her husband is a noted symbolic imagery of Christ's love for the Church. God placed the first human beings in relation to one another, each with a partner of the other sex. This is necessary as one of the key functions of the marriage estate is pro-creation. By maintaining this vital principle, the Christian marriage will uphold God's plan as it was before the entry of sin and continue to model Christ's relationship to His church. Luther commenting on Genesis 1:28 writes, "From this we may be assured that man and woman should and must come together in order to multiply... For this word which God speaks, "Be fruitful and multiply," is not a command. It is more than a command, namely, a divine ordinance which is not our prerogative to hinder or ignore."(21)

5. Relational and Pro-creational Purpose In Marriage

The close connection between the marriage and the pro-creational purpose is to be noted as a divine gift. Therefore in understanding the command "Be fruitful and multiply," within the context of marriage, one has to weigh the gender issue and same sex marriage prudently. Gordon Wenham correctly notes, "Here, then, we have a clear statement of the divine purpose of marriage, it is for pro-creation of children...God desires his people to be fruitful."(22) As we look at the pro-creational purpose, we cannot neglect the relational purpose of marriage, where a vital relationship between a man and woman is established. Gordon Wenham in his commentary on Genesis 2:18-25 notes, "The creation of woman from man's rib supplies

what was missing for his perfect happiness...This suggests both passion and permanence should characterize marriage.”(23)

The ‘marriage’ terminology could be employed to refer a legal contract, a religious ceremony or to a social practice. Each perspective embodies a special character unique to its philosophy: legal jurisdiction, spiritual connotation, and cultural dimension. Ethical questions regarding marriage are sometimes answered by looking at the philosophy behind the definition of marriage one holds. For instance, in the contemporary Western world, the ideal of marriage has shifted its focus to the relationship of love, friendship and companionship, while in the Asian context marriage continues to function primarily as an economic and organizational unit used to create kinship bonds, pro-creation, control inheritance, and share resources. Both set of ideals, when considered in singularity, may portray only a partial view of the biblical understanding of marriage and its purpose. “They become one flesh...does not denote merely the sexual union that follows marriage, or the children conceived in marriage, or even the spiritual and emotional relationship that it involves, though all are involved in becoming one flesh. Rather it affirms that just as blood relations are one’s flesh and bone, so marriage creates a similar kinship relation between man and wife.”(24)

The problem we encounter with in the modern world is the recreational ideal attached to sex. Hence we note in the recent decades the attitude of society toward sex has truly swung from one extreme to another, whereby from the Puritan perspective of sex only for pro-creation, it has now come to be viewed as a means of recreation. The oneness of intimate fellowship between a man and a woman is well expressed in Genesis 2:24 by the phrase “*one flesh*.” Hence, marriage is a

fundamental institution that does not exist just for the emotional gratification of two individuals but for the greater benefit of the community which stands under the sovereign authority God. Therefore, marriage refers to the total union of body, soul, and spirit between a man and a woman, where expressions of genuine love, respect, and commitment are incorporated within the context of sexual relationship. Hence, from a Biblical perspective, sexual activity is both relational and procreative based on the command, "Be fruitful and multiply" (Gen 1:28).

People who interpreted the freedom of the Gospel as freedom to engage freely in sexual relations tend to operate on the basis of sex as recreational: whether it is premarital, incest, or extramarital, the Bible uses the word "licentiousness" to describe such an attitude. In relation to managing such evil thoughts, in his Genesis lectures, Luther advises people to return to the reading of the Word for strength. "In order to maintain chastity they should strengthen their hearts against the fury of the flesh by reading and meditating on the Psalms and the Word of God...I have observed many who have given free rein to their evil lusts and have fallen into shameful acts of wantonness." (25) Similarly, Jude in chapter 4 describes such people as 'ungodly persons who pervert the grace of our God into licentiousness'. Commenting on the chapter Richard Buckham notes, "In other words, they interpret the Christian's liberation by God's grace as liberation from all moral restraint (cf 2 Pet 2:19). They justify immoral behavior by an antinomian doctrine." (26) Peter too warns against sexual perversity and the adulterous nature in 2 Pet 2:14. Permissiveness described here as 'having eyes full of adulteress' implies "their eyes are always looking for with whom to commit adultery (indulge in their deceitful desires)." (27)

On a similar note, the problem of sexual permissiveness and perversion in the Corinthian Church too had led Paul to rebuke those who engaged in incestuous and adulterous sexual relations (1 Cor 5:1, 6:16-18). "Paul's view of sexual immorality, therefore, as a particular inner sin is precisely applicable to his doctrine of the body of Christ. The maintenance of personal freedom involves the voluntary acceptance of self-discipline." (28) At a time when sexual permissiveness and promiscuity is prevalent within our culture, it is imperative for us as Asian Lutheran believers to reaffirm our commitment to the Biblical view of sex as a divine gift to be enjoyed only within marriage between a man and a woman. When many countries and cultures in the West continue to promote same-sex marriage on the grounds of human rights and freedom, we in Asia must critically analyze such views and arguments in order to be true to the Scriptural teaching.

6. Same-sex Marriage - Broken Relationships with God and People

Same-sex marriage and homosexuality has probably generated the strongest tsunami in challenging the Christian understanding of marriage and family institution in today's context. While in the Asian context it is still a relatively passive matter compared to the West. "The concept of 'new morality', which promotes situational ethic ideology by rejecting all absolute norms, with the exception of the love principle, seems to have generated a strong acceptance within the Western society to marriage, family and sexuality." (29) Even in Luther's time homosexuality was not rare. Hence he addresses this issue in his lecture on Genesis 19:4,5. He says, "The vice of the

Sodomites is an unparalleled enormity. It departs from the natural passion and desire, planted into nature by God, according to which the male has a passionate desire for the female. Sodomy craves what is entirely contrary to nature. Without doubt it comes from the devil.”(30)

Homosexuality may not be a frequent topic reflected in the Bible, yet when referred to the obvious case scenario is that it is not approved (31) because it clearly undermined the basis of God's created order, where God created Adam, a man, and Eve, a woman and were granted with a specific command and objective to fill the earth (Gen. 1:28). In today's same-sex marriage debate in the Church, some groups have shifted the fundamental basis and authority for ethical decisions away from the Bible to things like "society", "culture", "common sense" and "human rights," to promote homosexuality as a normal and acceptable practice. While some other Christian groups have fallen back on the "Gospel of freedom" for their support in approving homosexual relationships. It raises an important question, is the freedom in Christ, also a freedom to sin. Luther in his lectures on Romans (32) chapter 6 states that only people who deliberately live in sin would do things contrary to the work of grace. We affirm that the Asian Church should not compromise its witness for a socially acceptable opinion that lacks godliness and biblical truth.

We as an Asian Church, should reject homosexuality and its practices, not because we hate those to do it, but because we want to fulfill our pastoral responsibility in helping people trapped with such tendencies and behavior to reform themselves. Further we affirm that "The image of God is both male and female and is reflected in a godly union between male and female where the creative power of God, His life-giving, His

self-giving and His moral nature are perfectly expressed. This is only possible in a heterosexual union.”(33) The purpose of rejecting homosexuality is because we believe it is against the divine purpose of creation. Although some nations may have enacted laws permitting same-sex marriages, the Asian Church must stand firm in rejecting such doctrines and practices because it lacks biblical support (Genesis 19; Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Judges 19; Romans 1:18-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 1 Timothy 1:9, 10). Distinction between the genders ought not to be confused and must be kept in line with the original creation order (Matthew 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12). We must be true to the gospel of Christ and it must not be adulterated on the basis of love, tolerance or human rights (Romans 5:8; 1 Corinthians 15:3). But on the pastoral note, while we agree the Asian Church needs to make a definitive stand on same sex marriage and related practices as aberration and unbiblical, but at the same time we ought not neglect our Christian duty to minister to people with such problems with the love of Christ and with the objective of reform, renewal, repentance and hope.

7. God's Covenant Love Expressed in Christian Family Model

As noted previously, over the past few decades the Christian family institution has come under heavy attack due to popular post-modern thinking and social-economic pressures. This is confirmed by the annual increment in the statistical data for divorce and remarriage in most Asian countries. As Howard notes, “One way to clarify the current crisis is to show that the family has lost, or almost lost, many of the functions that once gave it power and prestige. It's economic, educational, protective, recreational, status-giving, and religious functions are

displaced elsewhere in society. The loss of these functions has been attributed to industrialization and urbanization.”(34) Hence it raises a fundamental question, is marriage a “covenant relationship” or a “term companionship”. It is here that Hosea 2:2, stands as a vital reminder and model for the Christian family relationship, “I will betroth you to me in faithfulness”. Such relationship conceptually originates from Eden and creation, where love, sexuality, marriage and family are placed within a divine framework.

- “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man (Gen. 2:23).”
- “Surely, as a faithless wife leaves her husband, so have you been faithless to me, O house of Israel, says the Lord (Jer. 3:20).”
- “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church (Eph. 5:31-32).”

Did Jesus reject the family concept? Some refer to Matthew 12:46-50 in claiming that Jesus was against the family concept as currently being taught in the Church or practiced in the community. *“While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him. Someone told him, ‘Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you.’ He replied to him, ‘Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?’ Pointing to his disciples, he said, ‘Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother’” (Matthew 12:46-50).* I would say such a claim is a

misconception based on non-contextual interpretation. Jesus is not indicating that biological family is not important; neither is He disregarding His family. Here Jesus is making clear that in the Kingdom of God, the most important family connection is spiritual, not physical. This is made explicit in John's Gospel, "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God" (John 1:12-13)

In the First Testament and later in the New Testament too, God's relationship with His people is often symbolized in human terms and exemplified in the context of marriage – it is a covenant relationship. Marriage and family therefore remain as an important platform for practicing faithfulness, mutual love and Christian discipleship, because in the life-long commitment and service, the constancy of God's love to his covenant people becomes reflected. God created marriage as a loyal partnership between one man and one woman as the right foundation for developing a family unit. It is within here that God designed sexual expressions to allow intimacy and pro-creation and which then continue to mirror God's covenant relationship with His people.

8. Family as a Missional Unit of the Church

The Christian community is meant to be like a properly functioning family. "God did not create marriage just to give us a pleasant means of repopulating the world and providing a steady societal institution to raise children. He planted marriage among humans as yet another signpost pointing to His own eternal, spiritual existence." (35) Family by divine design then is essential

in providing the best setting for rearing and nurturing of children as God fearing people with credible witness. Family as a missional unit then has the divinely entrusted responsibility to bring up their children in love and righteousness, provide for their physical and spiritual needs, teach them observe God's commandments, so that they will remain as credible witnesses to the world. For Luther, this is both pleasing to God as well as beneficial to the community. In a sermon on Ephesians 4:1-6, he says, "What could be more pleasing to God and more beneficial to men than so to live in your calling that God is thereby honored and that by your example you bring others to love God's Word and to praise His name." (36)

God fearing parents in a Christ-centered home, as they teach their children the art and skill of applying the meaning of love, healing, honor, respect, reconciliation, salvation and spiritual duties to God and humanity, would fulfill the divinely entrusted task. To this end every home in the Church, large or small, turns to become a house of faithful witness and service. In Luther's, 5 November 1525 exposition on Exodus 20:12 relating to the fourth commandment, he notes, "If obedience is not rendered in the homes, we shall never have a whole city, country, principality, or kingdom well governed." (37) This leads us on to reflect on the civil responsibility of Christian families.

9. Family and Civil Responsibility

While we agree that civil government has the responsibility to strengthen and defend the family institution, on the same note we agree that the Christian family as a single unit and the Church as a corporate unit, has a stewardship role (38) to play in civil matters. Citizens are accountable to God for the preservation of peace and justice and practice of love, mercy and

kindness to the less fortunate in the society. We believe God holds all persons, especially the community of faith, responsible to establish and maintain what is described as civil righteousness in the context of civil responsibility. Although God created church and state as separate entities, we support the idea that the Church should influence the state toward moral goodness, peace, justice, and mercy, and should hold it responsible (39) when there is violation of such principles.

10. Conclusion

In this paper I have attempted a biblical and theological reflection on some of the salient features relating to a Christian family. We begin by noting that the Bride imagery of the church offers a candid perspective on marriage, sexuality and family. Here we note that the interrelatedness between spirituality and mutuality in honoring, loving and serving forms the core value of a Christian family. Therefore healthy nurturing in families certainly contributes to the health of the society. With that in mind we affirm the mutuality and dignity held in common between man and woman, through which, responsible dominion over creation is exercised, companionship is shared and nurturing of children is practiced. This is possible because together they are created in the image of God . It is with this in mind we may want to re-read Ephesians 5:25 and Ephesians 5:21 in enumerating male headship and women subordination. Further we have noted that the apparent distortions and misuse of human sexuality is due to sin as described in Genesis 3. As we affirm that marriage and pro-creation are God's divine institution, on the same note we too accept the fact that singlehood and inability to produce children does not deem such people as being lesser individuals or lacking spiritual character.

Finally, we note that marriage must be between a male individual and a female individual. This is indicative that we assume a clear and categorical position in rejecting same sex marriage as it lacks biblical warrant and remains an unacceptable as a Christian practice.

END NOTES

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Lev. 20:13, "If there is a man who lies with a male as those who lie with a woman, both of them have committed a detestable act; they shall surely be put to death. Their blood guiltiness is upon them."

1 Cor. 6:9-10, "Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, 10nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God." Rom. 1:26-28, "For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, 27 and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error. 28 And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper."

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PRESENTATION 5

MARTIN LUTHER'S DISCIPLINE ON PRAYER AND IT'S ACTUALIZATION IN THE PROTESTANT (LUTHERAN) CHURCHES IN NORTH SUMATRA TODAY (Ephorus Jahanrianson: Saragih/GKPS)

Introduction

Martin Luther is one out of ten influential men during the second millennium.(1) He was a brave pastor and a social reformer. He stood between church and the kingdom; between two biggest institutions in medieval ages of Europe. He preached with power, he wrote clearly and with clarity. Unfortunately, many people do not know that his braveness and clarity resulted from his endurance and diligence in bowing down in prayer.(2) In his mind, he prayed, because Christ taught us to pray. He also taught others to pray. Usually, Luther speaks and writes about prayer, in order to connect between the social-life and the Word of God. In our modern day struggles in life, - according to Yancey's research: in his book, *Prayer*, can it bring changes? (*Doa, Bisakah Membuat Perubahan*, prayer has been lost.

For instance, in the book by Hans Kung: *On Being A Christian*, 702 pages,(3) there is no chapter about prayer, even in entry index of this book. When it was asked to him, Kung really felt sorry for his negligence. Kung felt so disturbing because the sensor of Vatican and the deadline from the publisher, so he forgot to write about prayer.(4) Yancey could not find out the reason, why Luther could pray for hours, meanwhile the people

today feel restless on the chair while praying even for ten minutes.(5) A simple question must be addressed, what happens with the prayer life in this postmodern churches today and then, how is prayer life among Lutheran Churches in North Sumatra? In remembrance of 500 years of Luther's Reformation it is really good to look back on prayer according to Luther's Theology and his discipline in prayer?

Prayer As A Result Of God's Touch

Martin Luther was born on November, 10, 1483 in Eisleben. His father is Hans Luther and his mother is Margarethe.(6) Hans Luther was an ambitious father, he was determined to see Luther become a lawyer. To achieve his aim, Luther was sent a school in Mansfeld, then to Magdeburg (1497), and Eisenach (1498). These schools focused on grammar, rhetoric and logic.(7) In 1501, at the age of 19, he entered the University of Erfurt, He was made to wake up at four every morning for what has been described as "a day of rote learning and often wearying spiritual exercises".(8) Luther's smartness was obvious and proven when he graduated with his master degree on 1505.(9) In accordance with his father's wishes, Luther enrolled in a law school at the same university that year but dropped out almost immediately, believing that law represented uncertainty. Luther sought assurances about life and was drawn to theology and philosophy.(10) He later attributed his decision to an event: on 2 July 1505, he was returning to the University on horseback after a trip home. During a thunderstorm, a lightning bolt struck near him. Later telling his father he was terrified of death and divine judgment, he cried out, "Help! Saint Anna, I will become a monk!".(11) After this experience, Luther

left law school, sold his books, and entered an Augustinian friary in Erfurt on 17 July 1505. (12) This storm and thunder cannot be interpreted as an ordinary happening. There was a special meaning and message in this experience. At least it is not so excessive if we say that God has used the thunder and the storm as His tools to call Luther. The thunder and the storm was the beginning of Luther's calling. As a divine meeting with God that developed a commitment to dedicate his life to Him. I think it is not so excessive if we parallelize, how God called Moses through the fire in the grass (Ex. 3: 2-4), God called Samuel by His voice when he was asleep (1 Sam. 3: 1-15), how God called Isaiah through the vision (Is. 6: 1-13), How God called Paul by the bright-sound lighting (Act. 9:1-9) and God called Luther by the thunder and storm. Through this experience God had called Luther and God's divine touch made Luther so faithful in his duty, faithful to his prayer and God who has called him.

Prayer in Luther's Theology

Throughout his public ministry as a teacher and preacher, Luther worked to reform the catechesis. A long the way, he forged an unbreakable link between prayer and sound theology.(13) Prayer was the most important thing, In Luther's reformation. Prayer was its basis. In Luther's life and work, prayer and theology are inseparable – prayer implies theology and theology implies prayer.(14) Luther affirmed that his theology was the fruit of his prayer. This is why the reformer would list prayer as a distinctive feature of the Christian community. In his document, *On The Councils and The Church* (1539), he calls prayer as a mark or a sign of the church.(15) That

is why the church exists, and if the church keeps on praying it will continue to exist.

From Luther's perspective the reformation of Protestant included a reformation of prayer.(16) That is why if we want to understand Luther's thought, then, we should analyze how and why Luther spent the much of his life praying for reform.(17) Marba J. Dawn, in his book: *Morning By Morning*, mentions: "Martin Luther said, that he had so much work to do for God, that he could never get it done unless he prayed three hours a day".(18) This familiar quote is also written in the book by John R. Rice, *Prayer: Asking and Receiving*. It really shows us how Luther prayed persistently.

In North Sumatra this theme is seldom taught by Lutheran Pastors. It is really true that when we reflect on Luther and his life, we will need to ask this question; what encouraged Luther so extraordinarily and radically to stand firm and bravely to say, 'here I stand'. Luther was alone to face the Empire and the church. He opposed the church's doctrine that had already existed for centuries. Here we find the answer: "I could never get it done unless he prayed three hours a day." Prayer gave encouragement, strength and the drive for his hard work. It too motivated him, gave clarity in his mind and became a source of power and hope. We too should see prayer as a blueprint of the reformer's life and reformation history.

In Luther's Large Catechism, he explained the most important thing about prayer. 'we pray because God commanded us to pray, He wants us to pray, and He is pleased by our prayers. Luther also reaffirmed that our prayers become acceptable because God's commandments, not because of us. God also promises to answer our prayers. Even God, Himself, taught us to pray. Luther encouraged others to pray, this points

to the fact that prayer is really important in his theology. For Luther, prayer is not passive. Prayer is active and takes its shape in our daily activities. Praying and learning are the most important for Luther, both of these are the root of his spirituality. In his unique works, Luther's Works Vol. 43, he wrote: It may well be that you may have some tasks which are as good or better than prayer, especially in an emergency. There is a saying ascribed to St. Jerome that everything a believer does is prayer and a proverb, "He who works faithfully prays twice." This can be said because a believer fears and honors God in his work and remembers the commandment not to wrong anyone, or to try to steal, defraud, or cheat. Such thoughts and such faith undoubtedly transform his work into prayer and a sacrifice of praise.(19) Again we see, that in Luther's theology prayer and works are inseparable. Pray and work. Work is not a reason not to pray and pray is not the reason not to work. Work not in laziness, but hard work. Pray not in patchy, but pray wholeheartedly, be diligent and discipline, because discipline is the root of discipleship. Without discipline it is impossible become a servant for Jesus. Even though Luther was a great scholar, father of reformation, famous preacher and lecturer but he did not place himself as a divine angel. For instance, on his letter to Dr. Justus Jonas, the assistant of rector in University of Wittenberg, he admitted his weaknesses. After the death of his daughter Magdalen, Luther said to Jonas that in fact he has to pray and thank even though his daughter had died.(20) We are just unable to do this without crying and grieving in [our] hearts, or even without experiencing death ourselves. It means, we keep on praying even when in sorrow. Luther was really committed in his prayer life; even sorrowful situations could not take away his time of prayer. In his another letter to Melanchton, Spalatin and

Nicholas von Amsdorf, he requested them to pray for him.(21) So, here clearly we can see the integration between prayer and works in Luther's theology.

Prayer and Power (Dunamai) in Luther's Ministry

In Luther's ministry, we do not only see his perseverance in praying but also its impact in his powerful ministry (dunamai = power not authority). Peter Wagner wrote in his book, about Luther: Martin Luther anguish with the medical prognosis that his associate, Philip Melanchton, had a sickness that would take his life. Luther knelt, prayed for his recovery, and the condition was reversed instantly.(22) Here, Luther prayed wholeheartedly and God gave the power promised to those who believed; to pray and heal those in sickness (Mark. 16:18, Mt. 10:8, Lk. 9:1; 10:9 etc). Luther also acknowledged and felt the presence of evil spirit which disturbed him while praying. John R. Rice, in his book wrote: Once as he prayed, Satan became so real to him, taunting, tempting, interfering, that Martin Luther threw the ink bottle at him. And the splash on the wall has long been shown to visitors to remind us of how real was prayer to Martin Luther.(23) In Large Catechism Luther also wrote that there was no other way out that can protect us from the threats of Satan except the power of prayer.(24). It is also interesting to read Luther's letter to Louis Senfl, a famous musician in his era. Luther wrote: For we know that music, too, (in addition to sound theology) is odious and unbearable to the demons. Indeed I plainly judge, and do not hesitate to affirm, that except for theology there is no art that could be put on the same level with music, since except for theology [music] alone produces what otherwise only theology can do, namely, a calm and joyful

disposition. Manifest proof [of this is the fact] that the devil, the creator of saddening cares and disquieting worries, takes flight at the sound of music almost as he takes flight at the word of theology.(25) This is the reason why the prophets did not make use of any art except music; when setting forth their theology they did it not as geometry, not as arithmetic, not as astronomy, but as music, so that they held theology and music most tightly connected, and proclaimed truth through Psalms and songs (See e.g., Isa. 5:1; I Sam. 10:5;).(26) Moreover, in the beginning of this letter Luther parallelized theology and music. Satan runs when hears the music as he runs when he hears the Word of God. Kenneth W. Osbeck also explains: Music is a gift and grace of God, not an invention of men. Thus it drives out the devil and makes people cheerful. Then the other forgets all wrath, impurity and all devices. Again, the devil, the originator of sorrowful anxieties and restless troubles, flees before the sound of music almost as much as before the Word of God.(27)

Actually this is the story behind the song entitled, A Mighty Fortress Is Our God, created by Luther. He arranged this song in the 15 century, to become a national hymn for protestant Christians in Germany. We see, that Luther modeled Jesus' ministry. New Testament notes that Jesus went to many places, preaching, teaching, healing, casting out demons and providing diaconia services were part of His daily ministry. A theologian named Derek Prince said: it is really odd if this ministry has been avoided by the churches in many parts of the world. Evangelizing, particularly in Western area, is more often done supposedly with the belief that the Satan or evil spirits do not exist. In respect, I say that evangelizing that does not involve casting out demons is not the evangelization according to New Testament.(28) Nowadays ministry with power and prayer that

are actualized and experienced by Luther seems more often be practiced in the churches of Pentecostal-Charismatic circles. I think we should admit that in these issues of prayer and power, they are more Lutheran than us. We need to learn from Luther's struggles about prayer and power. Its practice seems quite different with the modern Lutheran theologian. Moreover, the topic about the presence of the evil spirits seems to be left out from Luther's mainline theological discussions.

We often hear of Luther's name being mentioned in relation to the doctrines of salvation by faith, sacraments, sola scriptura, sola gratia and sola fide, but seldom in relation to the topic of deliverance ministry and healing ministry. It seems strange to us and looks like 'something that is out there'. Maybe, we need to talk of a second reformation in relation to prayer life and as a response to the implementation of Luther's theology.

Luther's Discipline on Prayer

Luther's discipline on prayer is mentioned in one of his letters sent to Peter Baskendorf, one of his old and best friends known to Luther since 18 years or more.⁽²⁹⁾ In this letter Luther wrote: Dear Master Peter: I will tell you as best I can what I do personally when I pray. May our dear Lord grant to you and to everybody to do it better than I! Amen. First, when I feel that I have become cool and joyless in prayer because of other tasks or thoughts (for the flesh and the devil always impede and obstruct prayer), I take my little Psalter, hurry to my room, or, if it be the day and hour for it, to the church where a congregation is assembled and, as time permits, I say quietly to myself and word-for-word the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and, if I have

time, some words of Christ or of Paul, or some Psalms, just as a child might do. It is a good thing to let prayer be the first business of the morning and the last at night.⁽³⁰⁾ In this letter Luther explained what he did personally when he prayed. Luther prayed early in the morning and before sleep at night. It is appropriate with what he wrote in his Small Catechism. Luther said that he read word per word The Lord Prayer, The Creed, The Ten Commandments, the sayings of Jesus, the sayings of Paul and Psalm. In *Luther Works Vol. 43* the pages of this prayer except (the sayings of Jesus, the sayings of Paul and Psalm) include 21 pages (191-211 e-book edition). So can we imagine, it will take time even to read it, however if he meditate it. Luther also said: You should also know that I do not want you to recite all these words in your prayer.³¹ it means that Luther did not want that other people model this prayer as rigid doctrine. As Luther said: "our dear Lord grant to you and to everybody to do it better than I", it would imply that the model and length of prayer would depend on how Holy Spirit guides us.

Luther's reminder to give space for Holy Spirit to speak while we are praying is also important. He said: I do not bind myself to such words or syllables, but say my prayers in one fashion today, in another tomorrow, depending upon my mood and feeling. I stay however, as nearly as I can, with the same general thoughts and ideas. It may happen occasionally that I may get lost among so many ideas in one petition that I forego the other six. If such an abundance of good thoughts comes to us we ought to disregard the other petitions, make room for such thoughts, listen in silence, and under no circumstances obstruct them. The Holy Spirit himself preaches here, and one word of his sermon is far better than a thousand of our prayers. Many times I have learned more from one prayer than I might have learned

from much reading and speculation.(32) In fact, Luther practiced his prayer in this manner: When your heart has been warmed by such recitation to yourself [of the Ten Commandments, the words of Christ, etc.] and is intent upon the matter, kneel or stand with your hands folded and your eyes toward heaven and speak or think as briefly as you can: O Heavenly Father, dear God, I am a poor unworthy sinner. I do not deserve to raise my eyes or hands toward thee or to pray. But because thou hast commanded us all to pray and hast promised to hear us and through thy dear Son Jesus Christ hast taught us how and what to pray, I come to thee in obedience to thy word, trusting in thy gracious promise. I pray in the name of my Lord Jesus Christ together with all thy saints and Christians on earth as he has taught us: Our Father who art, etc., through the whole prayer, word for word.³³ And for Luther we should pray in concentration: As the proverb says, "*Pluribus intentus, minor est ad singula sensus*"—"He who thinks of many things, thinks of nothing and does nothing right." How much more does prayer call for concentration and singleness of heart if it is to be a good prayer!(34) From the above quote from Marba J. Dawn and John R. Rice, it is noted that Luther prayed about 3 hours a day. It also makes sense when we read the sample prayer that is found in his letter to Peter.

Even though Luther convinced Peter that the Holy Spirit would help him to pray better than Luther himself, Luther also reminded Peter, that his sample of prayer was not a rigid doctrine. It can be changed according to the guiding of the Holy Spirit. For Luther it was really important to give space for the Holy Spirit to work through our prayer. It is also interesting to note when he said, 'one word of His sermon is far better than a thousand of our prayers'.

Luther's Discipline on Prayer and Its Actualization in the Protestant (Lutheran) Churches in North Sumatra Today

When I was studying in Philippines, one of my colleague from Tiga Batu Malang said to me: "many of the pastors from Protestant (Lutheran) churches seldom pray or pray less". I was a bit angry listening to her statement. Emotionally, I asked her, about the presence of valid data that might support her conclusion? Then she said, that there was no any valid data that supported her statement. It was simply her observation based on what she overheard during the talk among pastors from the churches in North Sumatra. Most of the time she heard that they just talked about cars and land, rather than prayer and ministry. I graduated from De La Salle University with Ph.D in Counseling Psychology in 2003 and returned to Indonesia afterwards. While working as a lecturer at Abdi Sabda Theological Seminary in Medan what she said kept coming to my mind. "Many of you the pastors from Protestant (Lutheran) churches seldom pray or pray less and are not discipline in prayer". Being driven by her statement then I conducted my own research in the discipline of prayer among Protestant (Lutheran) Pastors and Elders. I started the research in 2003 and ended in 2012. I did the research four times. The first and second researches were conducted while I was in Abdi Sabda Theological Seminary as lecturer from 2004-2007 and 2008-2010. The third and fourth researches were conducted in 2011 and 2012 while serving as the Ephorus/Bishop of Simalungun Christian Protestant Church (GKPS). The next step was how to put it into a book. I began the survey on the discipline of daily prayer and meditation based on our daily reading as written in GKPS Susukkara or church Almanac which is based on Losungen. One of the Luther's spiritual disciplines

inherited to us was about praying and meditating on the Word of God at least twice a day, in the morning and in the evening. This discipline or tradition is continued by the Lutheran churches in North Sumatra through daily reading of the Word of God as written in Susukkara/Almanac of Lutheran/UEM churches' members. The practice of morning and evening devotion is used as one of the indicators to identify how far do the laity and clergymen from Protestant (Lutheran) churches actualize the spiritual discipline of praying and meditating on the Word of God in the morning and in the evening.

In my first research on 2004-2007, I conducted a survey with about 1600 respondents. The result showed just only 37% from the respondents had actualized it. Most of the respondents did not practice it. It meant only 37 % prayed and meditated on the Word of God regularly and on a daily basis. The finding above showed us that in doing of Luther's spiritual discipline most the participants were still in the disappointing level. (1-20 bad level, 21-40 disappointing, 41-60 average, 61-80 satisfactory, 81-100 most satisfactory)

The second research was conducted in 2008-2010 and the respondents were from the clergymen of one of the Lutheran churches in North Sumatra. The total of the respondents are 149 persons. 54 persons of the 149 persons said that they prayed regularly in the morning and in the evening. The result of this survey was not so different with the result of first survey. Based on this finding, the spiritual discipline of the clergymen was still at a disappointing level. Again, a survey was conducted in 2011 with the same purpose. A total of 700 elders from Lutheran churches in North Sumatra were involved in this survey. The result of this survey showed that 157 respondents or 22.5% practiced Luther's spiritual discipline. Only 22.5% elders had a

spiritual discipline in praying and meditating on the Word of God daily basis. The finding was lower compared to the previous findings. The next survey was conducted among 28 of Pastors of Lutheran churches in 2012 with the same indicators. The result showed that 16 out 28 respondents or 57.14%, admitted that they prayed faithfully on a daily basis in the morning and evening. Meanwhile only 3 of 28 respondents or 10.7% faithfully prayed and meditated on the Word of God with discipline on a daily basis. If we used both of this indicators, praying and meditating on the Word of God on regularly daily basis, according to Luther's spiritual discipline, the result was 33.92%, ($57.14 + 10.7 : 2 = 33.92\%$) and is still at the disappointing level. After I found out that the result of the survey from 2004-2012 were consistent, still in the disappointing level, then I began to understand and honestly agree with my colleague's statement when we were in the Philippines: "Many pastors from Protestant (Lutheran) churches seldom pray and are not disciplined in prayer".

The result of the survey showed that the spiritual discipline of pastors and elders in Lutheran Churches in North Sumatra was far from expectation and at just an average level. If we compared this with the practice by the Evangelical and Charismatic groups, they are at satisfactory level or even above. The Lutheran Church in North Sumatra is far left behind. The simple conclusion we can make based on the result of the survey is that, both pastors and elders are still at a poor level in practicing the spiritual discipline of Martin Luther. Hence, serious measures should be taken by the UEM member churches on how to improve the spiritual discipline based on Luther's discipline. Retreat and training on prayer and meditation based on the Word of God should be conducted more frequently. Efforts

should be doubled to feed not only the head but also the heart with spiritual nurture. From the reformation fathers, including Luther, we learn from their experience, that more prayer leads to more power, less prayer leads to lesser power, and no prayer means no power. If power (*dunamai*) brings or influences change, it makes sense that the Lutheran churches in North Sumatra actually bring less influence to the life of their congregations. It is also proven and supported by the lower Lutheran Synods that the average attendance on Sunday service is about 38- 45 %. This figure of course is still higher compared to 1-3% of church attendance in most of the churches in Germany. But the aforesaid figure was small compared to the average attendant on Sunday service at some Charismatic churches; where attendance record more than 100 % and most of them belong to UEM member churches.

The surveys show that the root of this problem was the ministers of Lutheran churches, who do not have enough time to pray regularly, to meditate the Word of God day and night to actualize it faithfully. In other words, we still do not depend on Him totally or fully surrender to Him. The root notion is that; less prayer equals to less power. According to the findings above, I recommended the UEM member churches in North Sumatra to conduct retreats not ministry or administrative meetings, coaching and training on prayer life for both pastors and elders more frequently. It is time for Lutheran churches to rise up to become prayer people; more prayer equals to more power.

End Notes

¹ William R. Russell, *Praying For Reform: Luther, Prayer and The Christian Life (Lutheran Voice)*, Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2005, p. 13

² *Ibid*, p. 12

³ Hans Kung, *On Being A Christian*, New York: Image Book Doubleday, 1984

⁴ Philip Yancey, *Doa: Bisakah Membuat Perubahan ?*, Jakarta: BPK GM, 2012, hal. 7

⁵ *Ibid*, hal. 7

⁶ Martin, Brecht, *Martin Luther*, James L. Schaaf (translator), Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985, pp. 3-5

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¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 5

¹¹ Martin, Brecht, *Op. Cit*, p. 48

¹² E.G., Schwiebert, *Luther and His Times*, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950, p. 136.

¹³ William R. Russell, *Op. Cit*, p. 14

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 92

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 92

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¹⁹ Martin, Luther, *Luther's Works, (Devotional Writings II) Vol. 43*, Helmut T. Lehmann, (general editor), Philadelphia : Fortress Press, 1999, pp. 193-194

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We are unable to do this without crying and grieving in [our] hearts, or even without experiencing death ourselves.

Martin, Luther, *Luther's Works, (Letters III) Vol. 50*, Helmut T. Lehmann (general editor), Philadelphia : Fortress Press, 1999, p. 238

²¹ *My constipation has become bad. The Lord afflicts me. But pray for me, because I always pray for you, that God may strengthen your heart.* Martin, Luther, *Luther's Works, (Letters I) Vol. 48*, Helmut T. Lehmann (general editor),

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²³ John R. Rice, *Prayer: Asking and Receiving*, Murfreesboro: Sword Of The Lord, 1942, p. 280

²⁴ Martin Luther, *Katekismus Besar*, Jakarta: BPK GM, 2001, hal. 153.

²⁵ Luther, Martin, *Luther's Works, (Letters II) Vol. 49*, Helmut T. Lehmann (general editor), Philadelphia : Fortress Press,

1999, p. 428

²⁵*Ibid*, p. 428

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²⁹ Martin, Luther, *Luther's Works, (Devotional Writings II) Vol. 43, Op. Cit*, pp. 187, 193-194

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PRESENTATION 6

Contextualizing Luther in Contemporary Japan

(By: Naozumi Eto, Th.D.)

1. Most Well-known Next to Jesus

Among ordinary people in Japan, it is not an exaggeration to say that Martin Luther is the most well-known Christian next to Jesus Christ himself. There is no such statistical ground to prove my hypothesis, but judging from the facts regarding the books available for adults and children, and from references in the textbooks of world history and ethics at schools, my guess is probably not far from the truth. Mother Teresa may be another figure that is very popular and respected. Thus, if popularity is a measure, Augustine, Calvin, Hegel, Kierkegaard, Martin Luther King, Jr. and many other thinkers, theologians, educators, and activists cannot compete with Luther. Japan has been recognized as a country that succeeded in achieving modernization first among Asian countries by introducing western civilization in the middle of the 19th century. However, as the national motto of the Meiji government, "Japanese spirit and Western learning" suggests, Christianity has not been able to gain many adherents and the Christian population has remained a very tiny minority. Christianization did not take place along with Modernization or Westernization, in spite of the fact that Christian contributions in many fields such as culture, art, music, education, social welfare, medicine and so on, have been great.

In this historical and social background, Martin Luther is known as the reformer and founder of Protestant churches, and as the one who made the shift into the modern age possible (although he himself lived at the last stage of the Middle Ages). It is interesting to see that within Japanese Christian churches in 1917, Protestants celebrated the 400th anniversary of the Reformation while Roman Catholics harshly criticized Luther and his Reformation. It seems that intellectuals were very aware of this event. I am really looking forward to seeing what will happen in Japanese society in 2017 when Lutherans celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation with several enterprises including the joint worship service with the Roman Catholic Church.

2. An Image of Luther in 1917

As I mentioned above, ninety-seven years ago in 1917 there were celebrations and memorial events at the 400th anniversary of the Reformation. At that time, what do you think attracted people inside and outside of the Christian church? The most impressive image of the Reformer, according to the biographies and essays published at that time, was his being free and independent against the spiritual authority of the Roman Catholic Church represented by Pope Leo X and the secular authority of the Holy Roman Empire represented by Emperor Karl V. It might not be so difficult to criticize corrupt and depraved customs in the church at that time, but it might have been very difficult to criticize the teachings of the church which had been maintained as infallible for centuries under the authority of the Pope as a substitute for God. Those who criticized the church found their lives threatened, as all secular and political power was in the hands of the Emperor who had

the power of life and death. Nevertheless, Luther would not change his mind or position and said, "Here I stand!" His firm religious conviction might be changed only if reason and biblical understanding were to accept those ideas which criticized his own.

A century ago, Japanese intellectuals appreciated Luther's mind and spirit of freedom and independence from and against any outside authority, as the mind and spirit of the Modern Age, in contrast to that of the Middle Ages. Luther was regarded as a hero who opened the door to the modern period. For those who lived in the transition period from feudalistic or pre-modern Japan, when an extended family system, village system or Imperial state system restrained the freedom of the individual in Japan, Luther was indeed respected as a champion of liberation. At the threshold of the post-modern period when bonds among the members of a family and the people in their communities are becoming weaker and weaker, and egocentric life-styles are becoming more widespread, the image of Luther must be revised with a new insight, or become more balanced in response to today's world.

3. Sola Gratia

As the very radical slogans of "Sola Gratia" and "Sola Fide" show, all the teaching of Luther has the unique and exclusive characteristics against human nature. The Latin word "sola" would not allow any room for human efforts or religious training to attain salvation. "Justification by grace alone through faith alone" is the essence of Lutheran understanding of salvation just as Epistle Paul teaches. We have no interest in re-examining the "synergism" controversy between Philippists and Gnesio-Lutherans in the late 1550s, which took place concerning the

claim that the human will could cooperate with the divine grace to achieve salvation. After the controversy, the Lutheran position is clear. If we get a bird-eye view of the world history, a stream of realization of the autonomy of human spirit and mind is visible from 13th century on in the west (Dietrich Bonhoeffer).

The realm for religion had been narrowed into the inner world at the age of enlightenment which Kant represents. Even though the religion could survive in the modern age, and "God" did not die as Nietzsche prophesied in his Zarathustra, the role of God seems to have been reduced or weakened and that of human beings has been enlarged or strengthened in return in the eyes of ordinary people. Is the religious truth of God's all and exclusive activity of salvation (Paul Althaus) still valid? Let us see the religions of sola gratia first. Besides Bakhti religion in India, Jodo-shin sect of Japanese Buddhism must be typical in this regard.

As Karl Barth, in his Church Dogmatics, called Shinran (親鸞) and the Mahayana True Pure Land sect (浄土真宗) that he founded, "Japanese Protestantism," we should also be aware of one of Japan's religious traditions which has some serious commonality with Luther's teaching of justification by grace through faith. Though it does not share the name of Jesus Christ, it does have the name of Amitabha or Amida Buddha (阿弥陀佛) who made the vow not to become a Buddha or Tathagata (如来), or to enter into the Pure Land (浄土) or the land of Perfect Bliss (極楽), unless people around the world also become Buddhas and enter into the Pure Land. By the immeasurable mercy of Amitabha, and through the invocation of Amitabha, one can be saved. We cannot deny that this structure of salvation taught by Shinran is also very similar to that of Luther's justification by grace through faith.

Shinran also taught, very paradoxically, that if a good person can be saved, then why not also an evil person. By saying this, he emphasized the strong will of the savior Amitabha to save those who cannot save themselves because of their sinfulness or wickedness. Shinran showed the thoroughly penetrating salvation-religion of grace alone. The only thing that the sinner has to do is to trust in the savior by intoning the Pure Land Buddha's name "Namu-Amida-Butsu" (南無阿弥陀佛. Rennyo (蓮如), the eighth successor of Shinran, was a great evangelist and excellent organizer of the sect. He was successful in maintaining the essence of Shinran's teaching to sinners, while developing many popular literatures and hymns that ordinary people could understand and recite easily. His style of evangelism focused not on the individual, but on the family. Introducing various religious systems and practices which affected people's daily lives, such as the funeral service, family tomb, veneration of the ancestors, memorial service of the dead (to which Shinran paid little interest), Rennyo helped grow the True Pure Land sect widely and rapidly.

Only this religious body was able to use armed resistance against Oda Nobunaga (織田信長) who tried to unite and rule Japan during a period of rival warlords and civil wars, known as the Sengoku Period (戦国時代, 1467-1573), which coincided with the decades after Luther's death in Europe. Shinran's severe struggle of the soul, the joyful experience of the revelation of the mystery of salvation, and his deep reflection and thought, combined with Rennyo's great spiritual skills for evangelism toward ordinary people and his organizational abilities, made possible the birth and development of the largest religious body in Japan.

Although Buddhism as a whole is known as an awakening or enlightenment religion (覚知/悟道宗教), Mahayana Buddhism, unlike Theravada Buddhism, is by and large a salvation-religion (救済宗教). What I would like to say is not that this "Japanese Protestantism" helped Christian Protestantism become accepted by Japanese people more easily because the salvation-religion is not foreign to Japanese people. It is actually very familiar to them. Among the many Buddhist sects in Japan, the True Pure Land sect is the largest one. It is often said that such regions as Kaga (Ishikawa) and Aki (Hiroshima) are the areas where Christian evangelism faces the most difficulties.

From our experiences in Japan where a Buddhism of sola gratia is dominant, the deep insights on humanity which recognize sin, evil and weakness or powerlessness of human being, any religion cannot remain as a religion of self-help or justification by one's effort. One must admit that one cannot save oneself. This is still true after Luther 500 years ago or Sinran 750 years ago. Salvation religion is still needed.

4. Prosperity Theology/Gospel

Today Asia has grown to be called a growth center for global economy. The country of the GNP Number Two in the world is China, and Number Three Japan. Many other countries also have developed its economic and industrial power and raised a living standard of the people by making use of rich natural resources and huge population, good quality of labor force, and big market. Global economy, neo-liberalism, fierce competition, and market principle threaten the weak economy as well as individual life and give a chance for success. Does this time of economic and industrial development need or allow

flourishing a kind of a religion which encourages people to engage in economic activities more vigorously, seeking a life of prosperity more and more, leaving behind that of poverty? Prosperity theology or Prosperity Gospel is a name of a religion which teaches personal empowerment proposing that it is God's will for his people to be happy. The atonement is interpreted to include the alleviation of sickness and poverty, which are viewed as curse to be broken by faith. Is it not common to see religious desire to receive this-worldly divine grace in this part of the world? Japanese religiosity is not an exception. Prosperity theology/gospel became prominent with the background of New Thought movement and Word of Faith movement since 1800s, and along with televangelism since 1960s.

Some Charismatic movement leaders emphasized this trend. It was not only in the USA where this new religious emphasis has in fashion but in many parts of the world as well. Are we Lutherans also not tempted to adopt this prosperity theology/gospel in our ministry? Do we speak something relevant to the daily life including health and wealth of the congregation members from the pulpit? Luther teaches us to ask God to give in his Small and Large Catechism as follows:

"Let us outline very briefly how comprehensively this petition covers all kinds of earthly matters". "For example, we might ask God to give us food and drinks, clothing, house and farm, and a healthy body". "In addition, we might ask God to cause the grain and fruits of the field to grow and thrive abundantly". The exposition of the fourth petition of the Lord's Prayer keeps listing many things such as family members, friends, good rulers, and protection from all kinds of harm of natural disasters and social disorders in Large Catechism.

It is very clear that the God of the Bible does care the material welfare as well as spiritual welfare. He allows us to pray for "daily bread" which is necessary for our life telling that "God gives daily bread without our prayer, even to all evil people, but we ask in this prayer that God cause us to recognize what our daily bread is and to receive it with thanksgiving" in Small Catechism. This shows the genuine and pure trust in God who provides free and gracious gifts of all that is necessary for one's life and nothing else. No attempt of bargaining with God or manipulating him in order to attain prosperous health and wealth. I would like to mention that Prosperity theology or gospel has nothing to do with Luther's teaching about the fourth petition to ask God's gifts for bodily and materially welfare.

5. Justification by Grace Alone

Now it is time to speak about the central theological issue of Luther's Reformation; namely, the doctrine of justification by grace alone through faith alone. His teaching was sharply contrasted with that of works righteousness. There is no need to explain what "works righteousness" meant at the time of the late Middle Ages. All the piety and practice of the church was grounded in the teaching of works righteousness through the famous principle "facere quod in se est," which meant that God gives grace to those who do what is within them. I would like to develop this argument of works righteousness within the contemporary situation today. In today's world, as I told in the previous chapter, the global economy and neo-liberalism prevail, along with what is called result-ism, efficiency-ism and a fierce market-ism with its bare competition-ism that is predominant all over the world, including Japan. The law of the jungle, where the weak become the victims of the strong, rules the world, even

though it is said that a fair start is guaranteed for all people. Yet, in the field of economy, is this not just another expression of works righteousness?

The introduction of prenatal diagnosis has caused selective abortion to become more widely and more easily available. After a new testing method called "non-invasive prenatal genetic testing (NPT)" was introduced, the number of those pregnant women who take this diagnosis has increased because of its easy and convenient method. But, without hesitation, an overwhelming majority of pregnant women choose abortion if the result of a diagnosis is positive regarding the chromosomal aberration because they want to have a healthy or "perfect" baby. Can we simply say that it cannot be helped; we cannot bring up a child with disability; he/she must be unhappy? One of the reasons to promote a prenatal diagnosis in some country is the amount of the social cost for a life-long support in social welfare, medicine and education for the people with disability in comparison with the cost for the campaign of prenatal diagnosis.

To what extent will our Asian countries welcome or be able to endure the growing population of the aged, the physically disabled or those who are mentally handicapped – those who are regarded as less or non-productive? What lies behind these phenomena is an idea deeply rooted in the life-philosophy of works righteousness, or the principle of "facere quod in se est." Can you imagine the world or society with only "healthy" or "perfect" people? I am trying to relate a teaching of works righteousness and justification by grace alone through faith alone to contemporary issues in Japan in such fields as market economy and bio-ethics. My conviction is, as I have explained in my previous papers read in Malaysia, that Luther's revolutionary, counter-cultural teaching of justification by grace through faith

potentially means a lot to the contemporary social, economic and cultural situation. This teaching of justification by preceding grace tells us that a loving God gives grace to humanity without any merit on the part of humanity. From God's point of view, it is only our Being that matters, not our Doing. We are unconditionally accepted by God as we are. What we need to do is to reinterpret Luther's teaching of justification, which has been understood as a teaching about the forgiveness of sin, atonement and redemption attained by the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, and expand the context in which salvation takes place. Soteriology deals with how the salvation of sinners happens and with what sin is. Sin is often understood in moralistic terms as "evil-doing," hubris, or concupiscentia. However, sin must be interpreted in its relational sense, not in its ontological sense, if we would like to remain Lutheran. Relational understanding of sin necessarily needs a more holistic understanding of human beings, as the ones who have been created and are loved as partners in the life of the living God. Men and women have multiple dimensions of life, i.e., psychological and mental dimensions as well as physical and social dimensions, all of which are integrated by a spiritual dimension.

Therefore, it is not wrong to include sin as one of the threats against human existence in the world. As I mentioned above, the value of human beings should not be measured by their productivity or efficiency. Works of righteousness should not have room in this regard. Human disability must not be allowed to affect human dignity coram Deo. Human beings can only be appropriately valued extra nos, on the basis of sola gratia and sola fide. Otherwise, human beings will be measured only by the

extent to which they are useful for specific purposes as “human material”(人材).

Theologia crucis discusses not only the way in which God reveals God’s self in the suffering of Christ on the cross, but also God’s critical judgment on the sin of the world. Together with Liberation Theology, we could hold that the cross is the sign of victory over all the powers that stand against God and human beings, and the means of overcoming suffering. It is our task to find a solution to the situations of victims of the contemporary works righteousness value system in Japan and other countries in Asia.

6. Disasters and Eschatological Way of Living

It is not only Japan that was terribly damaged by earthquake, tsunami or typhoon. Ten years ago December 26, 2004, a great earthquake and tsunami took place off Sumatra followed by the terrible disaster in wide area of southeast Asia, India and east Africa. We cannot forget the great earthquake and tsunami which struck Eastern Japan followed by the meltdown of Fukushima nuclear power plant in March 11, 2011. Last year more than 8000 people died and 10 million affected by typhoon Yolanda in the Philippines. All of us experience natural disasters, big or small, everywhere. We also experience a works of diaconia everywhere. I will speak about the diakonia of the church in the following chapter. Theological discussion on theodicy cannot be avoided. But, as long as the idea of the suffering God is shared, we will not speculate the theodicy issue, rather anthropodicy becomes a matter. According to the theologia cruce of Luther, we must develop the idea of the suffering God when people are suffering. I am not prepared to develop this theological issue of

the suffering God today, but let me share with you a very interesting phenomenon which took place after “3.11,” or more properly, the “2011 Eastern Japan Earthquake and Tsunami” and the terrible Fukushima nuclear power plant accident of March 11th, 2011. Uncountable information, messages and stories (official and unofficial) were transmitted from person to person via various media including the internet. What kind of message would you expect to hear in the midst of fear, anxiety, disappointment, trouble, confusion, and a lack of hope or a desire to live? To my surprise, the message that was most often heard, spoken and transmitted was as follows: “Even if tomorrow were the last day of this world, I would plant an apple tree today.” It goes without saying that these are words attributed to Martin Luther. His name was attached to this saying when it was shared from person to person. But, it is also true that it is not possible to prove that Luther himself said or wrote this brief but heart-touching message. It is not possible to find this saying recorded on some page in one of the 100 volumes of the *Weimarer Ausgabe*. Rather there are several hypotheses about when and who coined this famous phrase, which is now attributed to Luther. This saying was a great comfort and encouragement to the victims of the 2011 disaster. His saying has helped them live daily life with hope, even though the damage is enormous; the victims’ sorrow is easily overcome; and overcoming the sense of loss and rebuilding the community as it used to be, is an enormous task.

More than thirty years ago, Mrs. Momoko Harazaki, the spouse of a pastor, suffered from cancer at the fourth and last stage, but in spite of this, she decided to keep helping her oldest son do his English homework and continued to take care of her little second son from her bed in the hospital. It was this saying

attributed to Luther that she loved, "Even if tomorrow were the last day of this world, I would plant an apple tree today," that supported her. Her spirit, prayer life, and way of living for her family members at this stage of her illness was maintained, or rather strengthened, by her eschatological hope which was formed and supported by these words of one who has a deep faith and a genuine trust in his savior Jesus Christ. Since then, many terminal stage cancer patients have received spiritual care and support through this saying attributed to Luther or written by someone influenced by Luther's eschatological faith and hope. Many or most of these patients may never have attended worship service at a church where the doctrine of justification by grace alone through faith alone is being taught. In a country where the name of Luther is well-known but little is known of his teaching, I was surprised but also so happy to learn, that Luther's saying has been so widely circulated and has contributed so much to the spiritual care and well-being of terminally-ill patients and those persons who have been terribly damaged through the loss of hope. It also makes me wonder, in addition to Japan, might this also be the case for other Asian countries?

7. Diakonia

One of Luther's most popular writings is *The Freedom of a Christian* (1520) which begins with two paradoxical statements: "A Christian is a perfectly free lord, subject to none," and "A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all." As I previously said in earlier papers, Lutherans in Japan were active in developing social services including the running of social welfare institutions. Three years ago when the great earthquake and tsunami assaulted the eastern part of Japan, four Japanese Lutheran church bodies, under the umbrella of "Japan Lutheran

Emergency Relief," together with the LWF and many overseas Lutheran churches, developed a three-year project called "Lutheran Tonaribito" (Lutheran Neighbors), and with the help of many church members, experienced various diakonia service activities on the national and congregational church level.

Through this experience as a church, diakonia was once again recognized as an essential part of the mission of the Christian church, and not merely a "tool" or "aid" in evangelism. Diakonia can only be performed on the basis that we are blessed — abundantly blessed — by God's grace in Christ, which has made us "perfectly free" and "subject to none." Therefore, we are ready to serve others in need as "a perfectly dutiful servant of all" and "subject to all." This Christian way of life or ethics is more than an ethics of "give-and-take" or "mutual aid (互助)." Today's social welfare system is going to shift from the public aid(公助), to private aid(自助) with mutual aid. Mutual aid is necessary, but the partner may not always be able to give back in return, and that is why the spirit of diakonia is absolutely essential. A Lutheran understanding of diakonia with Luther's teaching of freedom, love and service has a unique message for people in society today.

8. Ecumenical Dialogue

Martin Luther, a man of five hundred years ago, is still an eloquent speaker on behalf of God and Christ. His main theological message of justification by grace alone through faith alone remains a powerful and vocal statement which is still able to stand against the dominant philosophy of humanity and this world. The ground of human life is not in his or herself, but is extra no-s. This teaching should not be confined to the doctrine

of soteriology with only the redemption or forgiveness of sin, but should be wide ranging to include the doctrine of creation as well. All living things, including humanity, are creatures *ex nihilo*. No one has the right to claim his or her existence's dignity within only oneself. Our being has been declared unconditionally and affirmed wholeheartedly; and therefore, humans have dignity and rights even in this very competitive and "result" oriented society. Because our being and life has been made alive by grace alone, we are responsible to living beings around us. We are responsible for not only justice and peace, but also for the necessary welfare of the environment. That is why contemporary environmental ethics are also defended and supported by Lutherans. The idea and practice of *diakonia* must be appreciated and performed by the church, people and its organizations. The history of more than forty years of ecumenical dialogue has proved that the Lutheran assertion is also an ecumenical assertion, together with the traditions of the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches. We are very happy that it is not only Lutherans but also fellow Christians of other traditions that will celebrate the 500th anniversary of Luther's Reformation. Lutherans in Japan are in the process of preparing commemorative worship services with Roman Catholics and others in 2017. We must be confident that Luther's theological heritage is still both valid and challenging to us here in Asia as we stand at the threshold of the 21st century.

FORUM 1

Theological Foundation of Lutheran Diakonia

(Rev. Prof. Dr. Pilgrim W.K. LO) LTS, Hong Kong

1. Anthropological Consideration
 - 1.1. Biblical Remark
 - 1.1.1. Nobody is able to live alone
 - 1.1.2. Helper created from God's caring will
 - 1.2. Lutheran Remark
 - 1.2.1. Passiv vita
 - 1.2.2. Mutual needs fulfilled by mutual service
2. Lutheran Theological Principles
 - 2.1. Co-creator
 - 2.1.1. Working with God according to His good will for human
 - 2.1.2. Working with other creatures as solidarity for God's good will of creation
 - 2.2. Pro nobis
 - 2.2.1. Self sacrifice
 - 2.2.2. Fight for justice of others
 - 2.3. Holistic approach of anthropology
3. Effective Diaconal Work founded on Faith and Trust through Love
 - 3.1. Non-Christian
 - 3.1.1. Resource
 - 3.1.2. Ability
 - 3.1.3. Knowledge
 - 3.2. Lutheran
 - 3.2.1. Faith and Trust in God,
 - 3.2.2. Christians are called to love and to serve their neighbour
 - 3.2.3. No trust results failure service
 - 3.2.4. Christians need to win trust from clients through faith in God

FORUM 2

The Denial of The Women's Role

(Rev. Dr. Raulina HKBP Theological Seminary, Indonesia)

Introduction

Before sharing about Indonesian Lutheran women's identity, I would like to first look at the experience of Mary Magdalene around the story of the Risen Jesus, as it's written in John 20. When Mary Magdalene went to Jesus' tomb, she found that the stone had been removed from the entrance. After discovering this, she told it to Jesus's disciples but they didn't believe her. Her word of witness to this event was not received or believed. This is why the two disciples went to the tomb and after seeing the tomb themselves, they believed about the empty tomb, but they were not yet aware that Jesus had risen. Mary Magdalene was the first to know this. For a second time, she entered into the tomb and met with two angels, and then Jesus, but she didn't know it was Jesus. Only after Jesus called her name, did she recognize Him. Jesus gave her a command to go and testify – to bear witness – to His resurrection.

Thus, Mary Magdalene is the first witness to the resurrection of Jesus. She saw and believed. Beside this, she is also the first messenger to testify the good news to the disciples. She received a mission command from Jesus to bear witness to His resurrection. It is important to note that in the resurrection account that we have as recorded in the gospel of John, this mission command to bear witness is first given to a woman (v. 17) and then is given to men (v. 21).

However, the testimony of Mary Magdalene is not easy to receive. It was influenced by tradition and Jewish culture which did not receive women's testimony. Women didn't have right to appear as a witness in the court, indeed women weren't allowed to talk in public areas. Actually in the Bible there is a note about a woman who received a revelation from God and it wasn't believed by the man who was the object of that revelation. An example for this is the story about Samson's birth. In that story, Samson's mother received a prophecy about her son's birth. Then she told it to her husband, Monoah (Judges 13). However, Monoah did not believe, until he asked God to send the angels again. Actually the angels came again to meet Samson's mother and it happened when Monoah was not there with his wife.(1) This story is critical of the idea that God communicates directly only to men and women receive revelation only through men. As we see from this story, God has communicated directly to a woman (Samson's mother) and she then shares this revelation to her husband (Manoah). Thus, actually in the Bible we can find the foundation for receiving women's testimony, but the patriarchal Jewish culture didn't give space for it and it seems that it is also the case for Mary Magdalene.

This story also contains an impression about "the denial" of Maria Magadalen's role as the witness of the resurrection Jesus. We can see the impression by two things: (1) When she testified about the empty tomb (20:2), there was no clear information whether the disciples believed or not. However, later we can see that they didn't believe her. We can see through the action of the two disciples who this disbelief was proven went to the tomb soon and after seeing they believed (20:8). (2) The same thing could be said of her testimony, "I have seen the Lord" (v. 18). There was no report about the disciples' response,

whether they believed or not. So there is a possibility that as they didn't believe about the empty tomb so they also did not believe about the meeting between Jesus and her. Maybe this is Jesus' motivation to show Himself to the disciples (20:19-23) and then to Thomas (20:24-29).

So Swidler (2) notes that Jesus expressly showed Himself to woman first and gave the mission command to bear witness to the resurrection first to a woman. He did it to criticize what was happening in the cultural tradition. But Jesus was also aware that the woman's testimony would be received by the disciples with great difficulty. Because of this, during His year of ministry, Jesus had created a close relationship to some women.

The gospels have especially noted three resurrection events that involved women (Jairus's daughter, the son of the widow from Nain and Lazarus). In these three events, Jesus resurrected one woman and two men because of some women. The son of the widow was resurrected because Jesus had pity for the widow. Lazarus was resurrected after Jesus saw Mary's crying. Thus, actually in His ministry, Jesus had prepared the disciples and the crowd directly to receive and believe a woman's testimony of the resurrection.

One other important thing is that in her report Mary Magdalene said: "I have seen the Lord." The sentence also was given by the disciples to Thomas: "We have seen the Lord" (v.25) also by Paul: "Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?" (1 Cor 9:1). However, while the disciples and Paul are called as apostles but this is not true for Mary Magdalene. Actually the eyewitness accounts (visio Jesus) are very important in Christian mission, since the beginning of Christianity up to now. Thus Mary Magdalene's testimony is not subordinate in front of the disciples. (3) As Kanagaraj says that when Mary

Magdalene said: "I have seen the Lord" so it has an apostolic meaning. We can't deny that the early church honored *visio Jesus* very much as an principal sign of apostolic witness that is a foundation of Christian Belief (1 Cor. 15:3-9; Luke. 24:34). (4) Because of it, if the disciples and Paul then be called as apostles, so the same calling ought is also given to Mary Magdalene. She was also a witness (*visio Jesus*), moreover she was the first witness who saw Jesus and the first messenger who received mission command from the resurrected Jesus (20:17). Mary Magdalene acted as apostolic witness to the resurrected Jesus' tradition. Her witness is very important and has authority of Jesus Himself who sent her.(5)

Her experience can be a good reflection for us to see situation of other women. The role of Mary Magdalene as the first witness and as the first messenger, especially as an apostle, have been denied and have been seen as an unimportant thing. Such things also happen to many other women. Actually there are a variety of roles which women had played during Jesus' ministry in this world and during the beginning of Christianity (see Luke 8:1-3; Acts 18; Rm. 16). However those roles are often denied credibility and seen as nothing (unimportant). Indeed up to now there are many women who have participated in a variety of church activities and there are many other women who would like to participate, but their presence is often not honoured or received in the church. They usually face challenges and hindrances in performing their roles. It has caused the potential and talent of women being curbed and their participation is not honoured and received; as it ought to be. As if there is no an important thing that women have done (will do) in the church.

This is the general picture of women in the church, including women in Lutheran Church in Indonesian/Batak context. Actually almost all Lutheran Church in Indonesia received the ordained women as a servant of God. However there is an impression that the women are not yet received fully. So, we can say that our church is still ambiguous in its attitude toward women being in positions of authority. The gate has been opened but the door sometimes is still closed. This has resulted in women being faced with many challenges and difficulties in continuing Jesus' mission in this world. I myself have twice received rejection to serve according to the official letter from Ephorus and the reason for the rejection was that I am a woman; not because of my credibility and ability. The rejection came from a male elder (in 1998) and from a male pastor (in 2000). And apparently these challenges are also faced by many other women pastors in Lutheran Church in Indonesia.

Last month, KN-LWF had a meeting. Through our sharing in that meeting, we found that in fact even up to now the rejection/limitation for service for women pastor is still happening. Moreover, there is a Lutheran Church that formerly ordained women to be pastors, but has now cancelled its commitment to women's ordination and no longer ordains women. The experience of women pastor in HKBP Church (some years ago) can also be seen as oppression against women. Actually a few years after 1946 some Batak women had studied in Theological School. Many Batak women were very interested to learn theology and were hoping to serve in HKBP Church. But they faced very huge and deep challenges in being received as Ordained Pastors in HKBP. There was a long debate during General Assembly (1956 to 1984) and finally in 27 July 1986 HKBP ordained the first woman pastor, Rev. Nortje

Lumbantoruan. There were some reasons for refusing the ordination of women pastors: [1] The ordination was not in agreement with Batak culture; that the place women is to be subordinate to that men. Batak culture does not allow women in becoming a leader and the agent of God's grace, to pass the God's blessing. [2] There were some other churches, which were older than HKBP, did not receive the ordained of women pastors. [3] Based on 1Corinthians 14:34 (Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says).(6)

Although most of Lutheran Churches in Indonesia have received the ordination of women pastors, it does not mean that they have been freed from practical limitations. Beside the three reasons for refusing the ordination of women pastor in HKBP, as given above, there are many other factors that influenced the status and the role of women in the church. That is:

- (1) There is an opinion that women don't have a good ability, especially to serve in difficult areas.
- (2) That women are generally intellectually inferior to men.
- (3) Pregnancy and giving birth can be seen as a hindrance to efficient service.
- (4) Church structure. For example there is a change in the HKBP Church Order, which allowed limited space for women to be chosen as the leader (decision maker). Formerly the candidate for parish is five from one district, but now just two candidates. Beside it, the representative of women in the HKBP General Assembly is very limited. The experience of women pastors from the other churches in relation to women representation in their General Assembly is not clearly stated but depends on "the grace" of the top leader of that church. etc.

There are some reasons given to reject/limit/deny women pastors' roles in the church. The command, duty, confidence that Jesus had given to a woman (Mary Magdalene) to do God's mission in the world and to act as an apostle, apparently was not appreciated by the other apostles very well. They did not believe her and did not acknowledge her status as an apostle of Christ. So even in the church today, there are some who would deny that God sends the gift of the Spirit and calls into ministry whomever God might choose – both women and men. As Jesus had said: "You didn't choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit" (John 15:16).

Jesus has entrusted the mission command to Mary Magdalene, so why the church (as the body of Jesus Christ) does not do the same. Although Martin Luther, 498 years ago, did not talk specifically about women's being and status in the church, however, gender justice is one important issues during the reformation. For God blesses both of women and men. God also calls both of women and men to jointly participate in the mission to this world. Because of it, we need to ask: why some women are still prevented in performing their role as servants of God, or as the witness and the messenger of the good news. What could be done to reform patriarchal culture and 'androcentrism' texts in the Bible, and the bias worldview in the church?

Endnotes

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3. Baucham, *Gospel Women*, 285, 296.

4 Jey J. Kanagaraj, "The Profiles of Women in John: House-Bound of Christ-Bound," Bangalore

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6 Situmorang, Roida. *Skripsi S-1 : Sejarah Pemikiran dan Kenyataan Penerimaan Pendeta Wanita di HKBP*

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FORUM 2 (B)

What Circumstances do the Woman Pastors Face?

Collected Stories from Woman Pastors in the Lutheran Churches in Indonesia

(Rev. Basa Hutabarat)

Description of Women within the Church

As an executive secretary of the National Committee of Lutheran World Federation in Indonesia, I will convey the condition of female pastors serving at the Lutheran churches of Indonesia. My presentation will be in practical and pragmatic manner, rather than the conceptual.

The 13 LWF member churches in Indonesia make up to approximately 5.1 million members. Of the 3,169 pastors, there are about 723 female pastors. Their responsibilities include becoming local pastors, parish pastors, superintendents, lecturers, office staffs at church headquarter. Only one serves as a general secretary (church leader). Being committed to a call which LWF had made in relation to women's ordination, all the Indonesia Lutheran churches ordained women as pastors. Although there is a general "show of their commitment", there is one member church which does not ordain women anymore. We assume that it is because it has made an agreement with Missouri Synod (LCMS).

Luther's picture

The picture of Martin Luther's family, being called a priestly family, became a model to Christian families in

Indonesia. When Luther traveled, the wife (Katarina von Bora) functioned at home as a single parent – looking after the extended family, who lived in their house. She was a manager in terms of taking care of their financial issues, including that of some of the students who lived with them, as well the money for printing or publication of the Luther's writing.

Similarly, Indonesian women also take care of large households and family guests. They leave early in morning and return late night from work. They too attend to the children's education before bed time.

Most of the wives, as well as female pastors (who are wives themselves), hold these responsibilities and role. The priestly roles at home are also complemented by women in leading the children and family when the husband is not around. Hence, the role of women in faith growth of the next generation is vital.

Luther taught and discussed (known as table talk) with his students and family about faith. The summary of these discussions can be seen in Catechism – instruction books. Luther brought up issues and situation of his household into the writing of the Catechism; hence he came up with practical questions. Perhaps these were questions from his children, eg. "what is that = what does it mean". Such questions have a deep meaning in a personal way and with the objective of building a relationship with God and other Christians. The catechism is still being used in the confirmation class of Indonesian Lutheran churches.

Catechism

As mother looking after her children, Katarina von Bora had important and big tasks in planting the Christian faith and

values within the family's daily living. Therefore, women need to be equipped with knowledge of the Bible to explain the Catechism in the absence of the father or husband, who by most Christians regard as the family's priest. For this reason churches opened opportunities for women to take part in the ministries in the church. Churches also provided space for women to read the bible from their own perspective. Some churches even use catechism as material for memorization in Sunday schools. The Catechism book is also used for teaching faith, both, among the youth and children.

But teaching Catechism alone is not enough for the confirmation class students or Sunday School children; it needs to be practiced in the family, just like Martin Luther. Parents too should practice repeated reading of the catechism book in the family, and perhaps add some prayers regularly in the morning, evening as well as before meal time. These practice could help the Christians to begin and end each day in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Women's Ordination

As Luther said, "baptism makes all Christians to be priest and enable them to understand the Holy Scripture". This indicates that Luther allowed women to preach in public and to baptize. We understood it as Reformation, but it only became a reality and practice 400 years later. When church considers the role of women in ministry, it must be seen from the point of community leadership development. All of the Lutheran churches in Indonesia offer this role to women. There are bible women; deaconesses; and woman pastor who are recognized as leaders in the community. Women have made progress in obtaining equality in various forms of leadership. Nevertheless,

this progress has come through the struggles and efforts of women themselves; though with some men as well. But there are still men who do not see the reason for women to be involved in leadership roles; they consider that the best place for women to work is in their home or, that they may only be given opportunities to serve but not to lead.

The ordination of women opened the opportunity for women to have higher education and status in decision-making positions. For a long time, women and women groups have upheld the ministry of the church in various ways, such as the choir, bible study, help increase membership and church finance, being responsible for advocacy against HIV/AIDS and drug trafficking, and so on. The task of motivating congregation members was generally done by the women most of the time. In some congregation, it is the women who are majority participants in worship services. But the absence of women from the higher/upper position is characteristic of most of the Asian churches. This should not be considered as competition to men, but truly as a shared responsibility between men and women. Since ordination is not only for men, women should be welcome. This change, I believe is a gift of the reformation and would bring transformation within the churches. There is no area of responsibility or task which a woman cannot perform or fulfill.

Indonesian National Committee has come up with some stories as to why woman pastors find it difficult to be considered in taking up positions in the church. These stories have been narrated from the perspectives of woman pastors coming from different member churches. These shared stories seem to contain more negative aspects rather than success elements, despite one or two woman pastors occupying positions at the decision-making level.

National Committee brings up six major reasons as to why woman pastors are not in the top level of church administration: firstly, there is a common belief that the leadership function only belongs to men; secondly, there is a narrow understanding of women as leaders in the church; thirdly, the policy which provides certain quota for women in the church has not been enforced properly; though opportunity is given but not adequately; fourthly, women do not provide support to their fellow members in many circumstances. Women are not daring enough in promoting their fellow women; fifthly, women are in a weak bargaining position – powerless argumentation from women when presenting and defending their opinion; and lastly, the vast number of voters at the synod are usually male dominated.

Specific identity of woman pastors

Indonesian Lutheran churches have received women to be pastors. Their presence as pastors is not only to help increase the pastors in numbers, but to show their identity up as women pastors. The added value of their presence as women pastors brings out new color within the partnership life of the church; shared between women and men. This could be seen from the vital balance between men and women in various church mission activities. The identity of women is further enhanced in their capacity to provide caring services to the people around. The tidy administrative capabilities and transparent financial management in the churches is another identity that women bring into ministry.

FORUM 3

Postmodernism, Secularism and the Church: A View from Singapore

(By: Darius Lee, Regional Coordinator,
Global Young Reformers Network Steering Committee)

Introduction

"Asia" and "Lutheranism" – these are big words that may take entire theses to unpack. On one view, the term "Asian Lutheranism" may be an oxymoron, since Lutheranism as a Christian denomination emerged from a particular time and context in 16th century Germany.

This is not the view adopted by this paper. "Lutheranism" could better be understood as the set of theological doctrines and practices which emerged as a result of the Lutheran Reformation, which is now being professed and practised in various parts of the world, of which Asia is one of them. Asia, in turn, is a vast and very diverse continent, whether culturally, religiously or politically. It would be difficult to draw any simple generalisations. Hence, though there may be certain challenges common to all churches, the focus of this paper will be narrow.

This paper will begin with a discussion of the growing challenges to the Gospel today posed by secularism and postmodernism. Thereafter, I will analyse the impact of these forces on the Lutheran Church in Singapore. Finally, I shall propose some steps which our churches should take in light of these new challenges and opportunities. On one level, secularism in the sense of healthy separation of the Two

Kingdoms of church and state is an important pillar of Lutheran doctrine. Jesus drew a distinction between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Caesar when He taught the people to "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's" (Matthew 22:21). Likewise, the disciples refused to stop preaching the Gospel when commanded, because it is more important to obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29). In the treatise "Secular Authority: To what extent it should be obeyed", Martin Luther emphasised the inviolability of one's faith in God:

Furthermore, every man is responsible for his own faith, and he must see to it for himself that he believes rightly. As little as another can go to hell or heaven for me, so little can he believe or disbelieve for me; and as little as he can open or shut heaven or hell for me, so little can he drive me to faith or unbelief. Since, then, belief or unbelief is a matter of every one's conscience, and since this is no lessening of the secular power, the latter should be content and attend to its own affairs and permit men to believe one thing or another, as they are able and willing, and constrain no one by force. For faith is a free work, to which no one can be forced. Nay, it is divine work, done in the Spirit, certainly not a matter which outward authority should compel or create. Hence arises the well-known saying, found also in Augustine, "No one can or ought be constrained to believe."

However, this accommodative, benevolent form of secularism which values faith and supports religious freedom is manifestly *not* the kind of growing secularisation that is taking root. The kind of growing secularisation is a substantive philosophy and worldview which emphasises the pursuit of knowledge purely by human reason alone, wholly apart from faith and theological knowledge. On this account, faith is

regarded as inherently irrational and reduced to no more than a matter of personal taste or preference. Translated into the political sphere or into law, the impact of this form of militant secularism can have the same effect of marginalising the faithful as fundamentalist theocratic regimes. It is a godless world, a world where man is sovereign and Caesar is god.

Alongside this secular philosophy comes postmodernism. While modernists closed the door to faith, postmodernists denied altogether the existence of any universal truth. Postmodernism reduces every single account, including the Gospel, to a matter of interpretation or sentiment specific to a particular culture at a particular time and place. Postmodernism can be summed up in the self-referentially incoherent dogma "There is no truth" – which is itself a truth claim asserting universal validity.

Both (philosophical) secularism and postmodernism *a priori* exclude faith as a means of knowing the truth, which is entirely antithetical to the testimony of Scripture. The writer of Hebrews describes faith "the substance of things hoped for" and "the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). Furthermore, the Bible clearly holds out the reality of Jesus Christ as the Way, the Truth and the Life; the only way to the Father (John 14:6). Therefore, on the Christian account, there *is* a universal Truth which is rooted in God. The fundamental truths such as the existence of God, the reality of sin and the death and resurrection of 3 Jesus Christ are not held as a matter of sentiment or personal preference, but asserted and proclaimed as the universal truths for all time and in all places. Unsurprisingly, like in the time of Jesus and the Apostles and in the time of Luther, such unfettered proclamation of the Truth will always be gravely offensive to the ears of many in society.

What it means to be Lutheran in the midst of a larger Christian unity and environment

Growing secularism and postmodernism in Europe and America are keenly felt by the church across all denominations particularly because they have increasingly displaced Judaeo-Christian values from their historical place in society. In contrast, the circumstances in Singapore differ to some extent.

Due to its unique geographical location at the tip of the Malaysian peninsula, Singapore has been a global city from its inception. It has thrived on maritime trade, and in an era of globalisation, remains a key player in the global market, functioning to some extent as a “bridge” between “East” and “West” due to its unique mix of global influences on a tight-knit but pluralistic society.

They key difference with post-Christian societies in the West – and correspondingly the impact of secularism and postmodernism – lies in the fact that Christians in Singapore have historically always been a minority. Early Singaporean Christians were generally converts who were brought to faith by European and American missionaries. The Lutheran Church in Singapore (LCS) began in the early 1950s when Lutheran missionaries from America started the work here.

To-date, Christians are still numerically a minority in a religiously plural society. According to a 2014 survey by the Institute of Policy Studies, around 20.9% of the resident population in Singapore professed to be Christians (10.3% Roman Catholics and 10.6% Protestants). The rest of the population are Buddhists (26.3%), Muslims (15.6%), Taoists (14.8%), Hindus (6.8%) and non-religious (14.8%).

As one of the smallest congregations in the Christian community in Singapore, LCS has generally been willing to cooperate with the larger ecumenical Christian body. LCS is part of the National Council of Churches of Singapore (NCCS), whose membership includes the Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian, Orthodox churches as well as many other independent churches and Christian organisations.

Lutheran Bishop Terry Kee served as President of NCCS until he was succeeded by Methodist Bishop Dr Wee Boon Hup on 29 April 2014 this year. During his time as President of NCCS, Bishop Terry Kee has spoken with great clarity and moral leadership on many contemporary issues, such as sexuality and matters between church and state.

True to Lutheran identity, there remains strong emphasis on Christ as well as Word and Sacrament. For example, during the "Ecumenical Charismatic Healing Service" held on 6 October 2014 – involving Archbishop William Goh, Bishop Terry Kee and Bishop Dr Wee Boon Hup of the Catholic, Lutheran and Methodist churches in Singapore – Lutheran Bishop Terry Kee described Lutherans as the "first Evangelical Catholics", being too Evangelical for the Catholics and too Catholic for the Evangelicals. He was thankful, however, that people were coming to recognise both these aspects within the Lutheran Church.

Amidst wider challenges in the 21st century such as secularisation and modernism, the wider Christian body – including the Lutheran Church – has made effort to emphasise common values shared with other religious groups. These include interreligious dialogues on a wide range of moral and ethical issues facing society today, such as terrorism and family values.

Their motivation does appear to be a mindless acceptance of postmodern or relativistic dogma, but on the contrary, seems driven by the affirmation of certain universal values common to various religious faiths. Bishop Terry Kee once commented that the different faiths "had similar conviction in terms of the importance of good strong morals." He added that "*with] the increase of non-religious influence... (and) in the face of eroding moral fabric of our society, this actually brings the religious community closer together... on how we can work together to preserve and protect the moral [values] of our nation." (1)

Yet it is foreseeable that the global trends of secularism and postmodernism not leave Singapore untouched. Already, following trends worldwide, divisive debates about the role of religion in society and questions about public morality have become part of the Singapore landscape.

In the midst of increasing secularisation, the Bishop foresaw a growing rift "between a more united religious community versus the non-religious". This echoes the comments of Professor Joseph Weiler before the European Court of Human Rights in the widely-known case of *Lautsi v. Italy*:

Today, the social cleavage in our society is not among Jews and Christians. It is not among Protestants and Catholics. It is among religious and non-religious.(2)

Some steps which churches should take in light of these new challenges and opportunities

Like in the Garden of Eden, it is easy for Christians to be tempted to accept the promises of secularism and postmodernism. Who, in the flesh, would not want to comfortably hold to one's beliefs as a matter of unimposing

private taste and to avoid controversy by keeping one's faith private?

But the call of Christ is not a call to a kingdom of comfort. Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote in *The Cost of Discipleship*, "when Christ calls a man, He bid him come and die". The call is one of self-giving sacrifice. Lutherans should not eat from the fruit of what Martin Luther called the "theology of glory", but instead hold fast to the cross of the true Gospel.

Though the days of comfortable Christianity are over, this is no reason to despair. With these new challenges to the Gospel come new opportunities. Indeed, the early church was thrust into a world far more hostile and brutal than most of the societies we live in. Even in recent times, Christians in places like North Korea, Egypt, Iraq and Syria – our prayers and thoughts are with them – have modelled Christ to the world with their courage in the face of extreme persecution.

In light of these new challenges and opportunities, there are a few bold steps that the Lutheran Church should take:

1. *Firstly, there must be a focus on the centrality of Jesus Christ with a renewed emphasis on an active faith that moves in the power of the Holy Spirit.* The Catechism explains that the Holy Spirit "calls, gathers, enlightens and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and preserves it in union with Jesus Christ in the true faith".³ Every believer should "eagerly desire the greater gifts [of the Spirit]" (1 Corinthians 12:31).

2. *Secondly, like Luther in his time, the Lutheran Church should actively confront the new dogmas of our time by nailing their own Ninety-Five Theses on the doors of secularism and postmodernism.* Speaking the Truth in Love, Christians

everywhere should question and challenge these ideas in the context of their vocation, whether in institutions of higher education, workplaces, political office, or the like. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 10:5, "We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."

3. *Thirdly, churches should encourage the sharing of personal testimonies with strong Christological focus.* For the avoidance of doubt, this is not to advocate the use of self-glorifying or sentimental postmodernist narratives. Rather it is a call to speak boldly of one's relationship with Christ, like the early disciples and apostles who spoke of their personal encounters with the Lord.

4. *Fourthly, Christians should be ready to suffer for the sake of the Gospel; there is no room for cheap grace.* Suffering may range from milder forms such as ridicule and mockery to extreme forms such as the kind of mass murders that have taken place in parts of the world. But there is value in suffering, for "suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us." (Romans 5:3-5)

Above all, the 21st century is a time when Christians everywhere must heed the call of the Apostle Peter in 1 Peter 3:15-16: But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously

against your good behaviour in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

Conclusion

The legacy of the Lutheran Reformers is that of an uncompromising commitment to the Gospel Truth. It is a willingness to uphold the Truth against the prevailing dogmas of the day regardless of the cost to themselves. Martin Luther famously said, "A gospel that does not deal with the issues of the day is not the Gospel at all."

We live in a day where the rise of secularism and postmodernism threatens to extinguish the witness of the Gospel. Like the Forbidden Fruit, its allure is subtle and tempting. Secularism is willing to offer a life of comfort as long as one is willing to bow to Caesar by keeping one's faith private and living a compromised life that is of no consequence to the world. Postmodernism promises peace as long as one is willing to regard the Gospel Truth as no better than any other "truth" out there.

Neither dogma is acceptable to any committed follower of Jesus Christ. At this 3rd Conference on Asian Lutheranism, the call is to speak the Truth in Love, to proclaim the Gospel loudly and clearly in all its fullness. No one part of the Gospel should be left out, including not only the key pillars such as justification by grace through faith, but truths about marriage, the sanctity of human life, and the value of a free conscience.

This is a time for selfless faith and bold testimony, to be wise as serpents but innocent as doves (Matthew 10:16). Asian Lutherans should see these challenges and opportunities, facing them with courage, and forging a path of our own. And when

confronted or even threatened, may we stand firm and may our cry be that of Martin Luther: "Here I stand, I can do no other. God help me. Amen."

End Notes:

1 "Religious identity strongest in Muslims, Protestants", *TODAY* (18 June 2014)

2 Joseph Weiler's testimony before the European Court of Human Rights:
<http://dotsub.com/view/65bc5332-aa10-4b8c-bc50-d051e8f4fcc7>

3 Joseph Stump, *An Explanation of Luther's Small Catechism: A handbook for catechetical instruction*, 2nd Revised Edition (Malaysia: Fortress Press, 1993), at 5

FORUM 3B

Religious Pluralism in the Globalised World Responses of Youth in Indonesia

(By: Fernando Sihotang)

Introduction

Talking about youth as today's generation, we will get lots of perspectives about who they are, what affects them, where they stay and so on. Young people are the wanted generation to continue the mission of any institution or group, especially churches.

This paper actually wants to convey the challenges encountered by the church youth in Indonesia and their experiences voiced up to tackle the effects entering into their life dimensions. I have two dimensions, but connected to one and another, to talk about what are the closest experiences and living contexts that the young people have.

Firstly, the new lifestyle. Technology and the easy access to information, as a result of the world globalization, are among the other challenges; which the young people may be affected positively or negatively. On the negative side, church youths find this very challenging, affecting both quantity and quality of their fellowship. More young people decide to pull out from the fellowship as they find their new communities more comfortable, transparent and accountable. Another negative effect is generated with increase of socio-economy problems largely involving young people. This includes the moral decline

and relational issues within the society and family; they become more individualistic and socially insensitive.

Secondly, how young people positively adapt to multiculturalism. Indonesia is made up of more than 17.000 islands comprising various ethnics, languages, religions and races. Its population is approximately 230 million. Indonesia is also a religiously pluralistic society, with a Muslims majority (88.6 per cent), Protestants (5.8 per cent), Catholics (3.1 per cent), Hindus (1.7 per cent), Buddhists (0.6 per cent) and Confucians (0.1 per cent) (1) Perhaps because of its religious diversity, from the very earliest of its creation up to present, Indonesia calls itself neither a religious nor secular nation. Only these six major religions are recognised by the State.

Religious Pluralism in Indonesia

The debate on the State's position, as to whether the State is being administered secularly or religiously, has been ongoing since the beginning of the nation's establishment. There was a tension between a nationalist-group, who struggled to establish a secular state, and the Islamists, who endeavoured to establish an Islamic state (through the incorporation of the obligation of manifesting sharia for its adherents).

The long debate eventually ceased after the Jakarta Charter of August 1945 which definitely stipulated the Nation's ideology, Pancasila (2). It was a compromise without having the identity as an Islamic state or secular one. The first of its principles concerning the belief in One and only in One God was places as high priority.

The debate on the identity ceased under the very well known authoritarian regime of Soeharto, who was in power for

32 years. He used military power over individuals, masses and political organizations, in obstructing their freedom to assembly, freedom to association, freedom to access information, freedom of opinion or expression, and so on. Being vocal about human rights and seeking justice for the citizen's were impossible for more than three decades of his authoritarian regime. Freedom of expression was strictly limited to political and social stability purposes and economic development programs. There was no human rights protection policy remedied under this regime.

But it has changed after the reformation era from 1998; the new era of democratization in the country. Freedom of expression was like bird's feathers flying out from the cage to find a new place to rest.

Many people perceive that the post-reformation democracy is a "new friendly" era to human rights; significantly increasing the society's engagement in freedom of speech, assembly and even free to criticize the government's policy being uncommitted to on violation of democracy and human rights. What was promised of democratic governance and justice was immediately implemented after the fall of the authoritarian government by legislating human rights laws and amending the 1945 National Constitution; four times in the period of 1999-2002. Such changes came about due to public pressure to find a new system that needed to respond the challenges during the transition from an authoritarian to a democratic government. The most fundamental change in the new era is the inclusion of human rights chapter and clauses to the 1945 Constitution; it enshrined the right to freedom of religion or belief.

A great phenomenon that occurred during the time of transition to democracy was the attempt largely conducted by the Islamic groups, both the Islamic political parties and in

particular the Islamic fundamentalist groups, to emerge to be more actively involved in the political processes. We can see then how the Islamic-based political parties have significantly increased in number at the legislative seats after the reformation. They are not only successful to follow the platform of the party, but also they have been building the movement at the student level (college). Quoting what Richard G. Kraince says in his article that "the Indonesia transition has been marked by the powerful Islamic groups' attempts to dominate the legislative process, control citizen's private lives and diminish the rights of minorities"(3).

The issuance of several fatwas (*religious decrees*) by the Islamic Ulema Council or 'Majelis Ulama Islam' (MUI) has marked that the Islamic groups are trying to influence the religious lives, despite its fatwas are only referred to the Muslims. Indeed, this group does not have legal authority to be a part of the decision making process. But the government seems to consider it to be incorporated in the official regulations. Several fatwas, for instances, have been carried out by the government in taking part in the religious lives including the ban of Ahmadiyya's proselytizing activities through the issuance of the joint Ministerial decree.

From some sources I have read, there are often found the similar answers to the following questions. Do the Indonesian constitutions uphold and protect freedom of religion or is Indonesia categorized as a religious state? Is there any particular legal statement giving a privilege, special position, to one majority religious group rather than others? Most of those sources will give the same answers that there is a very strong commitment on the protection for freedom of religion or belief in Indonesia and the State is not categorized as a religious State

(read: Islamic State), in spite of nearly two-third of the Muslim population of the entire Arab League live in Indonesia. Furthermore, there is no legal statement in emphasizing for the privilege position given to a certain religious group, such as political position or different social treatment. All is equal before the laws regardless ethnic, language, race, and religion.

If everybody is equal before the law, in term of manifesting someone's religion or faith, what is then causing the freedom to be like a trophy contested and only some contestants can get the trophy where the others do not deserve to it?

Tough challenge now is encountered by churches, particularly where Christians are not dominant (4). Of course the winning against the groups wanting the State based on sharia Law (Islamic Law) has been a big championship for minority and nationalist groups . But in the contemporary Indonesia, sharia law actually flourishes in some areas.

Indeed the Islamic ideology, through the manifestation of sharia Law, had been rejected to be adhered by the State, but efforts are on the ground to push government to implement such laws in the country. An open door has been given by the State as a "gift" to several areas of Indonesia to have local regulations concerning the practice of sharia law. There have been 52 sharia laws enacted by certain local governments. Scholars in Indonesia call this phenomenon as "villages besiege the city". The Islamic fundamentalists up to the present have not been successful yet to promote the Islamic laws, but they have been successful to push for realization of sharia-based regulations in several areas.

Religiously-minority groups and women are groups which are disadvantaged by the practice of sharia laws in the local contexts. Certain penalties according to sharia law have been

realized to whom committed to adultery and gambling in Aceh province. Women, regardless which religions they belong to, are compulsory to veil their head as a compliance to Act that has been stipulated in Aceh province. Students in where the sharia regulations have been enacted must be able to read Quran. These are some examples that disrupt relationship between Muslim and other faiths.

Church – Pluralism, are they related?

In 1950s after the revolution of independence of Indonesia to standing with its sovereignty, the churches in Indonesia agreed to think of the oneness of the churches in Indonesia. This consensus was chiefly influenced by the historical logics of the independence of Indonesia consisting of multi-cultural people. In 1928 there was Youth Pledge, whereby they vowed to recognize only one motherland, one nation and one language of Indonesia. As it was understood that Indonesia was not a nation as it is. The Archipelago or Nusantara, as how Indonesia was called, existed with no commitment of being as one nation. Each area of the archipelago is living their own language, culture, religion or belief, tradition which are not related one to another. But what then united these areas to be one nation was based on their mutuality to have the similar dignity, which were being colonized and longing for freedom. The Youth Pledge was a landmark history of uniting all the differences and founding moment of the Indonesian independence later on 17 August 1945.

The aim of uniting all churches as oneness is to unite all the diverse Christians and churches stretching in 17,000 islands to manifesting the faith as Christians and to acknowledging the diversity through recognition and acceptance one to another (5).

The oneness means that every church respects the differences that each church has its own contextual theology. The oneness is the God's Grace to be manifested by the churches of God, to be one, to believe (John 17 : 21) and to know (John 17 : 23).

Of this experience, churches in Indonesia have come to mutuality in the understanding of oneness. The church oneness stems from God where human beings cannot either reject or accept according to their own want. As the church oneness consensus was chiefly influenced by the historical logic mentioned above, we can conclude that churches in Indonesia in the past and today also shall have a better understanding of what is being diverse in this multi-cultural and religious nation. The question is how the churches today will deliver this mutual understanding of this God's Grace to congregational levels that can be neither neglected nor accepted based on our own want.

Challenge to the Young People

The 1998 reformation has been a mark of the breaking of the cage door. Democracy is the main thing to be struggled for during the democracy transition. However, the fundamentalism on behalf o religions are as well flourishing very well marked by the freedom to opinion and expression.

Religious fundamentalism has not only been reaching the top-level people, but even getting much stronger in the schools. Hard line teaching targets young people to hate plurality with a reason to conversion.

The development of technology through the easily-accessed media has injected everybody on both "right" and "wrong" information. Hatred has been becoming worse than in the last decades ago. I subscribe myself to read online

newspapers, aside of taking less paper I would also like to have access to comments and opinion of the readers to the news or articles posted. There are two sorts of comments made by the readers, namely provocative readers and neutral readers.

In one sense young people can be considered as the weakest generation today. They may far exceed their previous generation to operating the technology devices, but they will not know what and how the world is without having been connected with the technology. The today's generation is really much depending on the availability of technology.

Young people are the open generation to technology. However, they are in general way insensitive to what happens surrounding them. Somebody might be more willingly updated to the issue emerging in Iraq rather than the religious violence at home country.

Action through Diaconal Works

I had been thinking for many months how to relate my works at the National Committee as Human Rights coordinator with Lutheranism in our own contexts. For some gatherings and meetings we have with the young people of member churches, I tried to explore their understanding of Lutheran identity as where their churches are part of it. Similar exploration in which I as well need to explore myself has brought me to think of how much I understand my works have already based on Lutheran Identity.

I have asked 50 young people having various backgrounds. Of the 50 youths asked 70 % answered the question whether they know if their churches are part of the Lutheran. The rest answered not sure and never knew about it. 100 % answered

“yes they did” in term of the question whether they read passages in small catechism before they go to confirmation. But none answer “yes they know” for question on what makes them become Lutheran.

Back to what this paper would like to convey in term of the challenges faced by the young people in this multi-cultural nation and what they would do to tackle those challenges, I will focus on how we, as young people of the church, act together as the today’s generation of the church.

Issues explored by youth not only come from their observation locally, but does also from outside of their countries. But in smart way young people pick up some issues that are contextual to what they are encountering today. For instance, talking about poverty is not simply understood as a cost of corruption anymore, but also a strong relation with climate change, human rights, gender equality, religious freedom, discrimination against women, inadequate access to education, and so on.

But how young people today also act contextually from what they have in themselves. I have mentioned in the previous pages that globalization has challenged the young people to be most vulnerably negatively affected by it. But on the other hand young people are in the right way to be the today’s generation to far exceed the other generation in term of having knowledge and capacity in technology. This is one example of how young people think of this as the way they identify their ability to working on something that other generations might be fewer to think of the same. I purposefully have not mentioned other examples, but what we can say is that there are some ways that the young people can do from and for something.

Lutheran churches are now working together, through National Committee, to collect young people to sit and talk together for what we can do together with other groups of faith in term of doing diaconal works in the society. There is a mutual understanding amongst the youth of church that the problems happening in the society including HIV-AIDS, religious freedom, environmental degradation, and so on must not be the responsibility of certain group of faith only. The responsibilities must be taken by all the religions together hand in hand.

There are lots of issues needed to be raised relating to young people and the challenges surrounding them and how to tackle such challenges in contextual way. Issues around how and what hampers them to act are other concerns that the Lutheranism gathering must address about.

To conclude this paper I would like to convey that all of the issues and actions that the young people are committed with are not simply because it comes from their own awareness of them being Lutheran, or their own understanding of being taught in their context that the Lutheranism dogmatizes them to do so. Now it is a challenge to us to think of how we should work the Lutheranism out to and amongst the young people of the church.

Endnotes:

Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS) or 'the Central Board of Statistics', *Indonesia dalam angka 2005* [Statistical Year Book Indonesia 2005] (Jakarta: BPS, 225).

² The word itself is derived from two Sanskrit words, which "Panca" means "five" and "Sila" means principles". It comprises of five principles: *supreme God; humanity that is just and civilized; national unity; democracy guided by the wisdom of representative deliberation; and social justice for all.*

³ Richard G. Kraince, "*The Challenge to Religious Liberty in Indonesia*" Heritage Foundation, research column (June 1, 2009). Visit the entire article at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2009/06>

⁴ In some areas Christians are dominant in number. They are predominantly located in the eastern part of Indonesia and some areas of North Sumatra.

⁵ This is the five Documents of the Oneness of Church of Indonesian Council of Churches (PGI). The two listed are part of the document.

Additional Resource Paper

The Distinctive Conceptions of the Lutheran Batak

Churches in Indonesia

(Batara Sihombing¹)

1. Introduction

The Batak tribe consists of several sub-tribes: Toba, Mandailing-Angkola, Simalungun, Karo, and Pakpak. Accordingly, many names of the Batak churches follow the division of these tribes. It is the Wuppertal-based German Rhenish Mission (RMG) which brought the Gospel to the Batakland in the Sumatra island, Indonesia, in the 19th century. The German Mission discharged its ministry in the land from 1861-1942. The German Rhenish Mission belongs to union Churches in Germany, that is, the combination of Lutheran and Calvin traditions. After the German Mission abandoned the Batakland, the Batak churches claim themselves as Lutheran and become the members of Lutheran World Federation (LWF). It was *Huria Kristen Batak Protestant* (HKBP) that first became the member of LWF in 1952, five years after the establishment of LWF (1947), and later on it was followed by the other Batak Churches. Initially, there was only one mother church in the Batakland, the German Rhenish Mission, except for the Karo-Batak church which is partly affiliated to Dutch Reformed Mission. Now, there are more than

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ten Batak church organizations as a whole, the membership of these churches could reach more than six millions.

Several Batak churches separated from the German Mission due to nationalism and self-reliance reasons. The separation was not agreed by the German Mission. For example, *Huria Kristen Indonesia* (HKI) is the first self-reliance church in Indonesia which separated from the German Mission in 1927. The other Batak churches separated from *Huria Kristen Batak Protestan* Church (HKBP), the successor of German Mission in 1942, due to the conflict and the sub-tribe reasons. In spite of the fact that most of the Batak churches have their head-offices in North Sumatra province, their congregations have scattered throughout the Indonesian archipelago and overseas as well (Singapore, Malaysia, and USA).

2. Several Distinctive Conceptions of this Movement

2.1. Gospel and *Adat*

In the daily life, the Batak people live out their *adat* or customary law strongly because they believe that there are supernatural sanctions against those who disregard the *adat*. In spite of the fact that the present Batak are critical of *adat*, they tend to follow only those elements that are in accordance with Christian faith, yet they strongly hold their *adat*. To Batak people, *adat* refers to those parts of their social and ceremonial system that regulate the relations between Batak relatives. *Adat* defines the rights and obligations among social categories of Batak. In practical life, the attitude towards *adat* constitutes a tension for the Batak churches. Since the beginning when the German missionaries planted the Gospel among the Batak

people, the *adat* of the Batak people was not totally rejected and some elements of the *adat* were used to spread the Gospel.

In short, some elements of *adat* were accepted and some were not accepted. Other religion and the charismatic movement often criticize the Batak churches for living out the elements of *adat* which were produced by the Batak ancestors in the time of darkness. Likewise, the church servants sometimes criticize the church members because they were absent in the church service while attending the *adat* ceremonies. But the members of the Batak churches keep observing the elements of the *adat* which are in accordance with the Scripture because they are the tradition given by the ancestors for the goodness of life, which the Batak Christians should respect (Gen 20:12 ; Deut 5:16). This indicates that the Batak churches are living according to two powers, the Gospel and the *adat*.

2.2. Baptism and Holy Communion

Baptism and Holy Communion are understood as a sacred tradition. The Batak Churches strongly declare that the Lutheran members are baptized once. That is to say, the Batak Churches encourage their members to avoid multiple baptisms which is generally suggested by the Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches; as the sign of new birth. While the Batak Churches cannot fully prohibit their members for attending the services of the Charismatic Churches, they are able to warn their members against being baptized again. Normally, those who receive the second baptism will be excommunicated by their Churches as part of the Church discipline. Needless to say, there are many Church members who are registered as Lutheran but they attend the services of Charismatic Churches on Sundays.

Holy Communion is usually given twice in a year, that is, on the Passover and Christmas days. According to the liturgy of Holy Communion, the Batak Churches understand the bread and the wine not as the body and the blood of Christ; rather, they are understood as *parhitean* ("mediation", "symbol") of the body and blood of Christ. This indicates that the Batak Churches do not follow the theology of Lutheran regarding the Holy Communion. This is partly because German Rhenish Mission which brought the Gospel was not a pure Lutheran institution.

2.3. The Position of Lectern

In being Lutheran, the Batak churches regard the preaching of the Word of God as important because the grace of God and the will of God are extended through it. According to Lutheran tradition, the platform for preaching the Gospel or sermon is on the right side and for reading the Law is on the left side. However, when we enter the Batak Churches we will immediately see that the position of lectern for preaching is not on the right side. Rather, many Churches put it in the center. Why? Again, it is the influence of Calvinistic tradition of the German Rhenish Mission. Hence, the Church buildings currently constructed by the Bataks too continue to follow the Calvinistic tradition by placing the platform for preaching in the center. Moreover, the biblical texts for preaching in the Batak Churches are not strictly taken from the book of gospels; as done by other Lutheran Churches. Instead, the biblical texts follow the lectionaries produced by the United Evangelical Mission (UEM), the former German Rhenish Mission; it contains the texts not only from the book of gospels but also from other books in the Bible.

Accordingly, the sermons preached on Sundays in the Batak Churches are not always from the Gospel or the good news. In short, many sermons have their emphasis on the Law or ethical issues. The workshops done by National Committee of the Lutheran World Federation in Indonesia (KN-LWF) in 2013 for the Pastors regarding the Lutheran identities, in which I personally involved, indicated our struggle with our Lutheran identities. We confess being Lutheran but our identities are not Lutheran. That is to say, we need to further define our identity as Batak Lutherans in Indonesia.

2.4. Corruption

Corruption is a well-known phenomenon in Indonesia. The former President Suharto was forced to step down in 1998 for a similar reason. It is publicly acknowledged that the well-known *KKN – Korupsi, Kolusi, Nepotisme* (Corruption, Collusion, Nepotism) is widely practiced and is the reason behind the Indonesia's economic crisis in 1998. Greed for wealth in terms of corruption seems to have played an important role in making the Indonesia bankrupt. The international economic institutions have publicly declared that Indonesia is one of the most corrupt countries in the world and the champion of corruption in Asia.

In fighting this corruption, the Indonesian government has established a *Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi* ("Corruption Eradication Commission"). As a result, now we often hear that many high ranking government officials, ministers, generals, governors, mayors, legislators, diplomats, and so on are put into prisons due to their corruption. The fight against corruption is going on in Indonesia, but still a long journey to go. The corruption mentality seems to have penetrated all levels of the

Indonesian people. There is no easy way to eradicate the danger of mammon in terms of greed for wealth.

When we look at the position of the Batak Christians and corruption, they too have contributed to Indonesia's bankruptcy by their involvement in corruption. A number of Batak Christians have been jailed due to corruption. The Batak place much importance on wealth. They have three clusters of their highest ideals: *hamoraon* ("riches"), *hagabeon* ("fecundity"), and *hasangapon* ("honor"). Every adult Batak knows these ideals. In spite of the fact that the level of the present Batak's closeness to these high ideals is not the same, there is hardly any Batak person who has totally abandoned these ideals. The reason is that the Batak people entered the modern Indonesia world only at the beginning of the last century. In other words, the three cluster ideals originate from the old religion, but nonetheless, still practiced by population. These ideals bring about covetousness towards all sort of positions which can bring prestige and increase material wealth. Many Bataks abandoned their villages in the Batak land and moved to new places in order to fulfill these ideals: riches, honor, and fecundity. It is clear that to be rich is important for the Batak.

The Batak Churches will have to fight against corruption that has brought about suffering in the country. This has to be carried out diligently. The Batak Christians should faithfully serve God (Matt. 6:24). The Bible does not prohibit the people to be rich. But, wealth is a blessing as long it is obtained with righteousness, justice, and wisdom (Prov. 8:17-21; 16:8). From the Lutheran perspective, I would say that the Batak Churches need to encourage their members to learn the Lutheran catechism. This is something that has been forgotten by Lutheran Churches. It is only learnt during the catechism class.

During the Lutheran workshops in 2013 I recorded that the Pastors admitted that in fighting against corruption the first Commandment should be learnt and practiced faithfully. The explanation of the first Commandment of Luther's catechism clearly states that mammon or wealth is always trying to entrap the people from being faithful and service to God.

2.5. New Year Eve

One of the religious days which is faithfully observed by the Batak people is the new year. On the new year eve at 12.00 o'clock, every family will conduct a night service in which the family members will ask for forgiveness from one another. This is a moving ceremony which is often followed by tears because each family member will confess his or her weaknesses in the past year and they want to enter the new year with a purified heart and the blessing of God. This the way how Batak Christian to end the old year as well as to begin the new year. However, as I observe for many years now, in this ceremony, only the children and the younger generation ask for forgiveness from the parents or the older generation. While the Bible tells everybody is a sinner (Rom. 3), the Batak parents will never ask for forgiveness from their children. This is something that should be changed in the ceremony. The children will see their parents as good models for being honest and bold to acknowledge their weaknesses. The Eastern thought that perceives the king and the queen as being always right appears to affect the Batak parents' attitude. This is why in Indonesia it is really a difficult to criticize parents or leaders in public, since it would bring about shame on them.

Most of the members of the Batak churches are Batak people. But some of the members are non-Batak who originate from other tribes in Indonesia especially in the cities and mission field. The leaders of the Batak churches are the bishops and in the parish or the congregation it is Pastor. For some Batak Churches, HKI and Simalungun Churches for example, the leader of the congregations is not a Pastor but a Teacher-Preacher or *Guru Jemaat*. The Pastor, who is helped by the elders, serves as the spiritual leader for the congregation. Both man and woman are accepted by the Batak Churches as elder, Pastor, and Bishop for the sake of Christ's gospel (Gal 3:28).

3. Conclusion

The Batak Churches are grateful to God for his blessing that has led the Batak people came out from their old religion. It was the German Rhenish Mission (RMG) that brought the Gospel to the Batak land in 1861. As a matter of fact the Rhenish Mission is not Lutheran; rather, it is a union, the combination of Lutheran and Calvinistic traditions. However, the Batak Churches feel that they are closer to Lutheran and have become the members of Lutheran World Federation. As a result, the Batak Churches need to define their own identities as Batak Lutheran Churches in Indonesia, as they still struggling to identify their Lutheran identities.

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GROUP REPORTS

TOPIC: The Biblical Foundation of Lutheran Diakonia: Christian Service and the Increase of the Word of God.

Report from Group 2

(Participants from Hong Kong, Japan, India, Indonesia and Malaysia):

1. Would you say that the word of God is increasing in your community or society? Why is it so?

The stagnation of the church in Hong Kong may be caused by the lack of a diaconal involvement into society. Due to the lack of diaconal activities, people cannot experience the love of God and share it – beyond the borders of the Christian congregations in Hong Kong's society.

By contrast, in India (New Delhi) evangelists of charismatic (independent) Churches attract thousands of people by evangelization and healing services – without any other forms of diaconal work. The money collected is to support such evangelistic activities only, not for any support of people in needs or diaconal activities. Here, the emphasis on proclamation with little diaconal activities seems to increase the churches in numbers. Also traditional churches benefit from these evangelistic activities, and grow, if not so much than the mentioned independent churches.

2. Is diakonia understood and embraced by ministers or congregations as intrinsic element of being church or a means of winning people to Christianity only?

The recent eruption of the volcano in Indonesia caused much damage and made people flee from the affected areas. In general, Muslim help organizations would only help Muslims, Christians only members of their own church or ethnic group. This time, the Protestant churches extended their help to all in need regardless their creed or origin. In addition, the aim was the empowerment of the weak on a longer term than just a short term first aid.

Lutheran congregations in Japan started a program, that members should visit their neighbors, regardless their religion, status, etc. in order to get to know them, to establish friendship, and build bridges of mutual understanding without the specific aim of winning them to the Christian faith.

In Myanmar one congregation in Yangon offers healing services that are attended even by sick Buddhist monks seeking help. The church can only offer this form of diakonia, which is prayer in faith, due to the limited financial possibilities. This offer of diakonia is accepted and appreciated by the surrounding non-Christian community. It strengthened the friendly relations to them.

3.Does the ministry of word and the ministry of service go hand in hand in your church?

In traditional churches in India (like Lutheran, Methodist, RC), proclamation and diakonia have been going hand in hand for many years, often since their early days under the missionaries. (see also in 1)

4.How is liturgia (celebration), kerygma (proclamation) and diakonia (service) related in your church?

5. Is Lutheran tradition help or a hindrance for Lutheran churches to become diaconal?

In Hong Kong the role of the pastor is very important and central: many activities depend on pastors. As a result lay people do not get involved in church activities, or some activities, like diaconal ones, which needed lay people as actors, are neglected. This contradicts Luther's emphasis on the "priesthood of all believers." Therefore, rather than Lutheran theology it is the person of the pastor, who encourages the participation of lay people and diaconal activities, or not.

By contrast, in India there is a lack of pastors, and therefore lay people take over many duties of pastors, lead worship and administer congregations. Probably, participation of lays is triggered by the lack of professionals and employed church workers.

Submitted by Rev. Wolfgang Grieninger

Report from Group 3

Discussion on Paper #1 "The Biblical Foundation of Lutheran Diakonia" by Dr. Po Chu Groenvold

Members: Marey Sundaraj, Joseph Prabhakar Dayam, Naozumi Eto(Leader/Recorder)

1. It is generally accepted that church's involvement to Diakonal work has been deep and good on a national level, but not necessarily so on a congregational level.

2. The more church's diaconal work becomes institutionalized as a social service organization, the bigger the gap between the ordinary church members and the institution becomes.

A more institutionalized and bigger social service organization needs more workers, and thus the percentage of the Christian workers decreases.

An intentional effort to teach the church members to commit themselves to diaconal work as an essential part of the mission of the church, but not as a means of evangelism, is necessary.

3. When the church is actively committed to the diaconal work, we cannot say that the Word of God is increasing in terms of number, but we can say with conviction that the Word of God is active in that work.

Report from Group 4

Question 1: Would you say that the word of God is increasing in your community or society? Why is it so?

In Cambodia, Christian Radio live broadcasting helps in the sharing Word of God to millions of people; which impacts many people and derives good responses. With openness from government, the Word of God keeps going and growing along with the churches. Millions of copies of Bible have been distributes to people in many areas across the country, both English and Khmer languages, even in some dialects for the Khmer Ethnic minorities.

Increase not only in numbers, but also in quality. In the Korean context the Word is increasing. Raises some questions: what is the difference...An increase in number? What indication?

In Indonesia, charismatic gatherings are increasing. On the Lutheran side, we feel we are decreasing. No Lutheran Church service is in English on Sunday. The Methodist church has just started English service. The Charismatic Churches do the same by reaching out to students; and attracting university students in English study department (with practice of native speaking preaching as observed by Dr. Philip Baker).

Question 2: Is Diakonia understood and embraced by the ministers or congregations as intrinsic elements of being church or a means of winning people to Christina only?

Doing diakonia without an objective to convert people to Christianity. It is seen as something lacking honesty; like buying them to Christian faith (observed by President Vannarith on Cambodian context). A balance in good works is needed in

the Buddhist countries; how we can give them bread without bread of life. Cambodia has been running the feeding program in the Christian primary school for children; Gospel sharing is still the priority.

Question 3: Does the ministry of the Word and the ministry of service goes hand in hand in your church?

In the Indonesian context: we are very strong in koinonia but very weak in diakonia. It could be seen by the budget. Need to change it. Beside it, we do diakonia for our own church, without caring other churches. In Cambodia, Lutheran churches are quite balanced in mission and ecumenical outreach through the Federation of Lutheran Churches in Cambodia.

Question 4: How is Liturgia (celebration), Kerygma (proclamation) and diakonia (Service) related in your church?

Sometimes, these three elements mentioned above are seen to be unrelated. In Cambodia, Lutheran churches sometimes celebrate Christmas and conduct Gospel rallies in public, in diaconal terms.

Question 5: Is Lutheran tradition helpful or a hindrance for Lutheran churches to become diaconal?

Actually Lutheran tradition does not hinder the church to do diakonia; though sometimes we are afraid to do diakonia. Rev. Vannarith observed that Lutheran churches have good products but find it hard to market them; good Law and Gospel preaching content, yet seem to receive poor results.

Report from Group 5

Leader: Bishop Terry Kee

Recording Secretary: Rev. Steven Lawrence

1. Would you say the Word of God is increasing in your community or society? Why is it so?

- a. Myanmar -- Yes, in church based schools and nursery. Rohingya people taking refuge among Christians / Church. Christian contribution towards social ministry is increasing.
- b. Indonesia -- Yes, in terms of numeric increase, there are more than 300 denomination.
- c. Indonesia -- Multimedia / easily accessible software and apps. have influenced Christians to read the Word, however this is not the case with sacrament. Diakonia as the extension of Sacrament
- d. Singapore -- 2000 census recorded 14.6% Christians (582,000.00), ten years later 18.3% (938 000.00). The Lutheran church in Singapore also recorded growth. This increase indicates an increase both in understanding of what it means to be a Lutheran Christian and Christ in the world through the church. Congregations are active in mission (local and overseas), diakonia, e.g. serving hot breakfast, adopt prisoners' family. Last 3 years new dimensions, members of both (two kingdom). LCS is increasingly challenging members to grow in understanding of what it means to be a child of God in the world.
- e. Malaysia -- Yes, members are increasingly aware of the need for the Word of God due to challenges faced in office, school / college / university and community. One of the positive

results is the church's self-reliance in terms of diakonia ministry.

2. Is diakonia understood and embraced by ministers or congregations as intrinsic element of being church or a means of winning people to Christianity only?

- a. Indonesia - Muslims suspect that Christians are proselytising Muslims in Indonesia
- b. Myanmar - Buddhist monks are imposing regulations when a Christian man wants to marry a Buddhist woman.
- c. North Sumatera – Through support given for agriculture and due to colonialism, people feel that they are receivers and not givers. There is a need to change this understanding in order to be self-reliant.
- d. Malaysia – Diakonia ministry of the church serves all without discrimination. Space is created for one to come to know Christ, but without compulsion.
- e. Singapore – Diakonia ministry of serving free meals for 50-80 people, not as a means for conversion. Local government has stepped in to support this diakonia/social ministry. This particular ministry builds bridges for the gospel.

3. Does the ministry of word and the ministry of service go hand in hand in your church?

- a. Indonesia – Yes, a desk/department dedicated for Diakonia
- b. Myanmar- Preaching of the word has motivated many to win souls for Christ
- c. Singapore – Yes, many are committing themselves to serve both in mission locally and abroad.

- d. Malaysia – Yes, it goes hand-in-hand. Local congregations are dedicated to manage diakonia ministry.

- 4. How is liturgia (celebration), kerygma (proclamation) and diakonia (service) related in your church?**
 - a. Indonesia – There are three departments for Diakonia, Koinonia and Marturia. The above 3 elements are present within the church through the ministry of the above departments.
 - b. Singapore – Reflected in the churches maturity to serve others, especially without noting ones religion. Mission to serve others abroad is the result of the above.
 - c. Myanmar – proclamation in all services, challenged people to set aside rice and firewood or land to support mission and social service.
 - d. Malaysia – present and can be identified in all local churches. Reflected in the life and ministry of the local church.

- 5. Is Lutheran tradition a help or a hindrance for Lutheran churches to become diaconal?**
 - a. Certainly, Word and sacrament as two sides of the same coin?
 - b. It liberates when rightly understood and embraced, it strengthens diakonia.

GROUP REPORTS

TOPIC: An Asian Response to the Western Idea of Proclamation and Mission –A Korean Case

Report from Group 1

1. **Does the “two forces in mission: historic transmission and indigenous assimilation” described above apply to your context, too? If so, in what ways?**
 - a. Indigenization has been an on-going process. But there is room for improvement.
 - b. The issue of gospel and culture remains an ongoing discussion.
 - c. Usage of local languages in worship and preaching is becoming a problem among young people. They prefer the national language or English.
 - d. We agree that there is a need to improve the use of local tools and symbols in worship.
 - e. A more urgent problem to tackle is Charismatism.
 - f. Maintaining a multiple identity is always a struggle and the fear of syncretism is equally real.
2. **How is the message of the Bible shaping the members in your church? What concrete measures is your church taking to promote the Bible reading by the people who are occupied with Internet, Facebook, smart phones, Twitter, blogs, DVDs, etc?**
 - a. Weekly bible study at home
 - b. Use of lectionary in preparing for preaching.

- c. Using the blog to communicate bible messages to young people.
 - d. Regular Bible quiz
- 3. **How are the Lutheran Confessions used in the Bible interpretation in your context?**
 - a. Due to the situation where most Pastors are trained in ecumenical seminaries, Lutheran pastors are ill equipped in Lutheran theology and spirituality.
 - b. The seminaries need to play a greater role in this.
- 4. **What aspect(s) of the doctrine, "Justification by faith alone," do you think are most relevant for your context?**
 - a. In the context of religious plurality, ethnic diversity and denominational plurality, forgiveness and acceptance seems to be a vital principle for building communal relationship and spirituality.
 - b. Law and Gospel must be preached in a relevant and clear manner.
- 5. **What aspects do you think are most necessary to be revised or complimented in the present theological formation and education in your context?**
 - a. Courses in Lutheran studies must be made core subjects for Lutheran students.

Report from Group 2

1. Does the “two forces in mission: historic transmission and indigenous assimilation” described above apply to your context, too? If so, in what ways?

Yes, Historic Transmissions-Indigenous Assimilation:

Christianity is regarded as western religion; India, Cambodia, Indonesian context: German missions influences Sabah: influence from Chinese churches and missions...India: some areas, churches assimilate indigenous music or melody. Justification by faith is the most spiritual principle; how to overcome the caste system and minister to the untouchables; lead to social gospel, devising modern missions methodology in India context. Bible doctrine: on religious, cultural and spiritual context.

2. How is the message of the Bible shaping the members in your church? What concrete measures is your church taking to promote the Bible reading by the people who are occupied with Internet, Facebook, smart-phones, Twitter, blogs, DVDs, etc?

Message of the Bible guides the preaching and reading the Word for members: Cambodia and India: Bible is the center of faith, everyone must carry a Bible to the church. What message of the OT provide more influence: bible stories and names from OT.

Sunday School where bible stories convey the message of Bible to children. The technology and gadgets has almost replaced the reading of the printed Bible in this modern age.

3: How are the Lutheran Confessions used in the Bible interpretation in your context?

To help to guide in teaching and preaching on grace, Law and Gospel, Also the translation of book of Concord; These are used for church confessional teaching and faith interpretation. Cambodian Lutheran Churches are in the process of complete BC by next year.

4. What aspect(s) of the doctrine, "Justification by faith alone," do you think are most relevant for your context?

Way of righteousness justified by faith alone and grace alone.

5. What aspects do you think are most necessary to be revised or complimented in the present theological formation and education in your context?

Constant teaching and reflection of the doctrine of justification by faith alone is the theological formation.

Report from Group 3

Leader: Terry Buck Hwa Kee / Secretary: Raulina

Member: Martongo, Philip Baker and Jin-Seop Eom

Question 1

In Batak context: Christianity was brought by missionary from Germany. Hence, the historical transmission and indigenous assimilation also apply in our context. Example: Some parts of Augsburg Confession were not included in the HKBP's Confession. The Confessional statement is one of the important documents in the HKBP, but sometimes it is not effective in the daily life. Example, in the catechism class, Confession is one of teaching material for young people, but it seldom influences their life; other influences around them are stronger. The prayer life also is broken weak. So sometimes it is not clear whether we are a Christian/a Lutheran.

In the Singapore context: Church is influenced by the bigger/larger Christian groups which different from the Lutherans. Sometimes we are not really Lutheran in the practice, and need to understand; what is the meaning of being a Christian and Lutheran. We cannot allow secular life to influence the church more and more. However we try to understand more and more about the assimilation. Example: Before becoming a Christian, we belong to one kingdom and after becoming a Christian we belong to two kingdoms. The church and government are separate from each other, but the church needs to encourage its members to be responsible in the two kingdoms. Positively, today there are many Christians, who serve as ministers in the government. It's a great success.

Question 2

Batak Context: In HKBP, we have house prayer meetings in the members' house, once a week. Besides that there are many choirs groups and every week they gather for practice. Before practice they would worship. So they would have 3 (or more times) of devotion: Sunday in the church and once a week in the house of church members. Daily home prayers and the reading of the Word is practiced.

There is a good interest to read the Bible. but understanding Lutheran theology (church dogma) is difficult. Most Churches in Indonesia have internet, fb, etc. so the young people have the potential to use the available tools/media to promote Bible knowledge. But these facilities (internet, fb, etc) are not well utilized. One family could sit around a table, but everyone would be busy with the electronic gadgets and not related each other. So we ought to be aware of the abuses of the technology and used it appropriately.

Question 3:

Augsburg Confession is used by the HKBP but some parts are not contextual to Batak situation. Need to give attention to Luther's teaching (Small Catechism, etc) and teach it to our children. Recently LWF published a book which shares sermon for a year (for 2015). All the sermons in that book are based on Lutheran Theology and Batak culture.

Question 4

Still relevant

Question 5

More attention and focus is on Christ, little attention to Father and Holy Spirit.

Many people are shy to talk in public, so the church needs to encourage them and train them in the Word and other relevant things.

Report from Group 4

Leader: Rev. Dr. Batara / Recording Secretary: Rev. Steven

1. Does the “two forces in mission: historic transmission and indigenous assimilation” described above apply to your context, too? If so, in what ways?

- a. In Myanmar, the first missionaries came from London through India worked among the Mara people, learned the language translated the Bible, NT-1927 OT-1956. Same methodology is used today to reach to Rohingya community.
- b. HKI – indigenous mission, Bible was translated to Batak language by Nomensen (NT) Johansen (OT). HKI, 1st May 1927 declared as an indigenous church. Batak Bible was used and liturgy was contextualized. Church structure is taking a different phase now, building are built according to tribal design. In the beginning the missionary prohibited the use of indigenous music, but now indigenous music is used during worship service.

2. How is the message of the Bible shaping the members in your church? What concrete measures is your church taking to promote the Bible reading by the people who are occupied with Internet, Facebook, smartphones, Twitter, blogs, DVDs, etc?

- a. Myanmar – Internet access is not available in the outskirts or smaller towns. Printed materials are still used e.g.

Burmese Bible or tracts. During the month of September the whole Bible is read from Genesis – Revelation.

- b. HKI – Daily Bible reading is made available in English, Bahasa Indonesia and the native language. Sunday newsletters are used to promote this daily Bible reading.
- c. Thailand – Even though we are saved by grace, but there is always an intention to do good works and to honor God. The Bible has shaped our peoples thinking. Young people are using mobile phone / internet facility to read scripture. Website contains daily Bible reading.

3. How are the Lutheran Confessions used in the Bible interpretation in your context?

- a. Thailand – Pastors have a better understanding of Law & Gospel. Preaching focuses on both.
- b. Myanmar – Grace is emphasized, however there are those who look at grace as “cheap grace”. Hence, sin is taken lightly. Preaching that law is important and serves as a guide for our daily living.
- c. Indonesia/HKI Baptism of children – Receive children for baptism through the faith of Godparents or adopted parents. Lutheran doctrines are being written to encourage preachers to preach from these doctrines. Joint work with para-church organizations is on going.

4. What aspect(s) of the doctrine, “Justification by faith alone,” do you think are most relevant for your context?

- a. Indonesia/HKI - Very relevant. People have now come to understand that the Law and Gospel are both important.

- b. Thailand – people do have difficulty in understanding the gospel for the first, that salvation is free, because you are justified by faith and not by works.
 - c. Myanmar - Too much of grace emphasis has sometimes led to negative experiences.
- 5. What aspects do you think are most necessary to be revised or complimented in the present theological formation and education in your context?**
- a. Thailand – Promoting the understanding that one is saved by grace through faith, and that diakonia is carried out as an act of love and not to gain merit.
 - b. Myanmar – Theological education at times does not connect with the people at the grassroots – Theologians should contextualize in order to meet the physical and spiritual need of the members. Theology from below and not from the above.
 - c. Knowing that we are saved by faith is important so that we do not do good works in order to be saved. Confirmation sets the stage for adult believers.
 - d. Question. “Are you saved?”
 - e. Theological lecturers tend to teach dogmatics in a very general way, there is a need to stress the Lutheran theological position.
 - f. Mass publication of material on Lutheran doctrines is important. Understanding and memorizing the small catechism is vital.

Report from Group 5

An Asian Response to the Western Idea of Proclamation and Mission (2 participants from Taiwan, 1 from Japan, 1 from Malaysia): Submitted by Rev. Wolfgang Grieninger

- 1. Does the “two forces in mission: historic transmission and indigenous assimilation” described above apply to your context, too? If so, in what ways?**

Christian Churches in Taiwan did not grow as the churches in Korea did; although Taiwanese pastors applied many practices of Korean Christians in Taiwan, like intensive Bible classes, long prayer hours, or prayer in the early morning. Why did these forms of piety not have an impact on the church growth in Taiwan, although they were of Asian origin?

The Lutheran Church in Taiwan has to reflect about reasons, why this “indigenous assimilation” did not work. In contrast, mission activities of the independent (mainly Pentecostal) churches attract Christians from the traditional denominations (like Lutherans, Presbyterians...), so that there is a shift of Christians to these churches. These Churches concentrate on aggressive mission activities in cities, sing worship songs from Australia, USA, use Western melodies or music - often without much assimilation. Why are they so successful?

- 2. How is the message of the Bible shaping the members in your church? What concrete measures is your church taking to promote the Bible reading by the people who are occupied with Internet, Facebook, smartphones, Twitter, blogs, DVDs, etc?**

Taiwanese Christians practice conducting intensive Bible studies in the morning or evening, go for Bible camps and meetings, also in the Lutheran Church. Some Christians, regard these hours spent for reading and studying the Bible as a kind of a "good work", done for their own sake and reputation before God and other Christians. This would be in line with traditional religious and cultural perception. However, the other experience is that Bible studies change the perspective of Christians with regard to themselves (being gifted by God) and others (perceive their needs). One pastor shared, that such change happens on the long term and needs time.

- 3. How are the Lutheran Confessions used in the Bible interpretation in your context?**
- 4. What aspect(s) of the doctrine, "Justification by faith alone," do you think are most relevant for your context?**

A pastor from Japan shared, that it is difficult to practice the doctrine in his country and due to the prevailing religious and cultural values, which are promoted strongly. However, the experience of suffering (sickness, poverty, loss of job, etc.) and the resulting dependence on others, makes many Christians understand that they can just receive God's grace as a gift and do not need to offer anything in return. Such experience of unconditional love provides them hope. Therefore sermons addressing these aspects, visitation to sick people and help for those in need, are important to the modern society of Japan, which is driven by success and performance.

6. What aspects do you think are most necessary to be revised or complimented in the present theological formation and education in your context?

In Taiwan an evangelistic training program by charismatic churches ("Double Wings"), which introduces into basics of Christian faith, is very popular among Christians including Lutherans. The Lutheran Church should develop such programs, based on Luther's Small Catechism, which is contextual and relevant to Taiwanese.

Japan's society is very visually shaped: people expect to see something happening, especially new things and changes in people. The way of worship in Charismatic Churches provides many visual elements, like speaking in tongues, display of religious gestures, healings etc. Lutheran Churches should continue the emphasis on the Word by preaching and teachings, but also need to develop forms to express the faith more visually and holistically.

GROUP REPORTS

Topic: A Biblical and Theological Perspective of Family – An Asian Lutheran Perspective

Report from Group 1

Leader: Rev. Wolfgang

Recording Secretary: Rev. Steven Lawrence

- 1. Christian marriage, because it witnessed by God and the Church, it requires lifelong commitment. How does your Church manage the issue of divorce and remarriage?**
 - a. Taiwan → Divorce rate is rising steeply. Remarriage is allowed. However there are relationship issues.
 - b. Malaysia – post-marital counselling to reconcile the couple. Opinion / personally remarriage is not biblically allowed, however Church practices it on pastoral grounds.
 - c. Myanmar – Church gives counselling for three years, and in the event if someone remarries, he/she will be excommunicated for three years.
- 2. Christian marriage rites are alienated from local cultures. Is that true to your context.**
 - a. Taiwan → Marriage must go through civil registration in order to be legally married. Church marriage is recognised as a ceremonial wedding and Chinese tradition is retained. Christian wedding rites are contextual.

- b. Myanmar – give bride price, only then the marriage takes place. A license is needed in order to conduct/solemnise a wedding, especially when it comes to a mix marriage. A couple who had legally registered their civil marriage is recognised by the church. Cohabitation / Marriage can be conducted by village heads or community leaders.
- c. Germany – civil registration first. A pastor gives blessing and asks the couple whether they would like have a Christian marriage. In future couples are only required to go through ceremonial/religious marriage. The challenge is to encourage contextualization.
- d. Malaysia – cultural practices / aspects are retained.

Report from Group 2 (Recorded: Naozumi Eto)

1. We are concerned about the church's attitude towards what is called the LGBT people, for its negative stance. We would like to suggest and understand them as follows. They are not the people whom the minister and the congregation give a spiritual and other cares, but the people whom God created in his image and blessed. Their personal uniqueness may have happened because of some biological reasons just like the case of those people with physical disability. Therefore they are not to be judged or excluded from the community of the majority people because of their difference.

2. It is true that the purpose of the marriage includes the procreation as is written in Gen 1:28 "Be fruitful and multiply!" But besides that purpose, it is also important to live a happy partnership with love and mutual support. If it is the case, the impossibility of procreation does not matter.

3. We acknowledge that marriage is made possible by the oath of eternal love and God's blessing. Therefore, it is expected to live a marriage-life with a life-long commitment. Nevertheless we also admit that there is a case in which a divorce is unavoidable, although it is not welcomed. One of them is a case of domestic violence which produces a victim of the weak, mostly a female partner. If a marriage of the imperfect persons cannot last long, both parties have a right to restart his/her life under the merciful forgiveness of God.

4. The hermeneutical principle of marriage and sexuality is Jesus Christ himself. Judging from the narrative stories written in the

Gospels, Jesus is the one who understood, accepted, loved, stood aside and empowered the marginalized and those who were called sinners.

Report from Group 3

1. Remarriage in the Church

- Some cultures or some churches in Indonesia look at who is the Innocent party in the estranged marriage.
- If the divorced women marries first, then the man could marry and vice-versa.

3. Premarital Counselling.

- Indonesia: Counselling for couples is at least two weeks before wedding and families counted as members of the church.
- Taiwan: Books used in counselling.

3. Wedding alienated from cultures:

- Indonesia: Two services are held: Christian wedding first then the cultural ceremony follows.
- Cambodia: Cultural ceremony first followed by the religious ceremony.

4. Mixed or inter religions Marriage: Christian and non Christian.

- Indonesia: Religious ceremony first then the government process. Absence of women. Presence of the women for marriage not required in some cases.

5. Mutuality and dignity of woman and man upheld. More promotion of equality, yet in some cultures, the man still dominate women.

- Taiwan: women high status, some men even cook for their wife.

6. Same Sex Marriage:

- The church is reaching out to them too. Pray God will change them and n all weakness.

7. Family Break down:

- Due to economic reasons / Individualism:

Report from Group 5

Key Theological and Pastoral Standpoints on FAMILY

- The family relationship is characterized by attitudes of self-sacrificing love, honor and mutuality (cf. 1 Cor. 6:19b-20). We too affirm that God has given us His Word (especially the 4th and 6th commandments) to guard the family institution (parents, children and spouses) (Exodus 20:12,14).
- The Christian family, in response to the biblical teaching in Ephesians 5:21-6:2, should display mutual respect and honor towards one another. Hence, honoring of parental leadership should be cultivated systematically from young.
- In modern times, particularly among communities influenced by post-modern urban cultures, co-habitation has become a common practice. The Lutheran Church is not exempt to it. Therefore needs seriously attention as the percentage among the younger generation is beginning to adopt a utilitarian understanding of marriage.
- Regular family worship and the involvement of the entire family in divine worship important-Worship as one family!!!!
- Breakdown of Christian family occurs mainly due to acquired negative social influences and the lack in biblical foundation and understanding of marriage as a covenant.

Key Theological and Pastoral Standpoints MARRIAGE

- Marriage should sustain the Christian family and we need to practice the biblical ideal in relation to sexuality. *You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your bodies* Marriage is not a sacrament, but has great spiritual value since it is God who has instituted it.
- Christian marriage, because it witnessed by God and the Church, it requires lifelong promise/commitment. Hence all necessary help must be given to couples before and after marriage, and as noted in Mark 10:9, divorce is not recommended.
- The Church needs to uphold the delicate balance between marriage and celibacy. Celibacy can be a legitimate choice.
- Our affirmation that marriage is between a man and a woman clearly denotes our position that same sex marriage is categorically rejected as unbiblical and unacceptable as a Christian practice.
- In many instances Christian marriage rites are alienated from local cultures and inevitably adopt a western outlook. Churches and seminaries must give greater attention to contextual efforts
- Premarital education and training for couples who are planning to be married is important. It must be done sufficiently and with greater consistency.
- Local seminaries should take efforts to review their curriculum and course modules in order to aid churches in marriage education programs.

Key Theological and Pastoral Standpoints – Gender and Sexuality

- Mutuality between man and woman in terms shared dignity, responsible dominion over creation, bringing forth children, love, respect and companionship, because together they are created in the image of God.
- Due to the fall into sin (Gen 3), God's gift of human sexuality has become distorted and misused.
- As baptized believers, we affirm that God has given us the Holy Spirit to sanctify. We are aided in attaining a fuller expression of the image (2 Cor 3:18).
- Cultural and contemporary ideology connected with the discussion on sexuality, must always be evaluated in the light the Biblical standpoints.
- The contextual issue of male/female pastoral leadership/ordination must be resolved from within (due to diverse needs and peculiarities of each context) through contextual reading of the Scriptures, honest deliberations and a non-gender bias hermeneutics.
- The Bible does not support same sex marriage, but consistently rejects homosexuality as being contrary to nature (Genesis 19; Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Judges 19; Romans 1:18-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 1 Timothy 1:9, 10). Nature too tells us that male and female are structured differently to complement each other in their relationship to love and for purpose of reproduction. (Deuteronomy 22:5)
- We should not use the ethic and principle of love and justice to override the Biblical condemnations of homosexuality.

- Jesus supported the absolute requirement for marriage between a male and female (Matthew 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12).
- We need to take the Scriptural warnings concerning the wrath of God and sexual sins including homosexuality, seriously (Romans 1:18-27).
- The Bible must be interpreted using the Bible. Culture can be a helpful hermeneutical tool but may not have authority over the Bible.
- We cannot substitute a false gospel of love and to replace the true gospel of Christ (Romans 5:8; 1 Corinthians 15:3).
- Causes of homosexual tendencies could be many. **Hence, on the pastoral note, we ought to be concerned for social, emotional and spiritual needs of those burdened by homosexual tendencies in order to help, reform and renew.**
- Asian churches must make a definitive stand on this: namely, rejecting same sex marriage and related practices. But need to reach out to such people with the love of Christ. Where Christians are battling their homosexual problems, while the practice is to be condemned, they should not be condemned but aided to reform.

DISCUSSION GROUP AND PLENARY REPORT

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
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REPORT GROUPING AND TOPICS

Group 1 - PREAMBLE: SELF UNDERSTANDING AND ASIAN
LUTHERAN IDENTITY

Group 2 - ASIAN RESPONSE TO PRAYER, PROCLAMATION AND
MISSION.

Group 3 - ASIAN LUTHERAN CHURCH AND DIAKONIA

Group 4 - THE LUTHERAN FAMILY – AN ASIAN RESPONSE

Group 5 - ASIAN LUTHERAN CHURCH ON GENDER AND INTER-
GENERATIONAL EQUALITY

PLENARY REPORT/STATEMENT

ASIAN LUTHERAN IDENTITY AND SELF UNDERSTANDING

Preamble

We in Asia acknowledge that there is no one common Lutheran identity, for instance what unites us is our theological commitments. However we continue to affirm the fundamental Lutheran teachings as explained in the Lutheran Symbols. We too affirm that our Christian identity and unity is founded on the 'one Lord, one faith, one baptism' understanding. In this we affirm the centrality of Jesus Christ and that salvation is received by grace alone and faith alone as a free gift of God. Our mission and witness to the world is guided by God's love and our understanding of the theology of the Cross. Hence as Asian Lutherans we affirm our unity and accept our differences and celebrate diversity. The process of establishing our Lutheran identity is not easy, as they are multiple Lutheran identities. The Lutheran Church in Asia should continue to work together in this process. This present initiative is one first step towards it. As we move towards 2017, we need to find ways to reach out to our Christian brothers and sisters in enhancing our ecumenical identity as followers of Christ.

Noted Contextual Challenges

- Religious plurality, resurgence of religious fundamentalism / nationalism, politicizing of religion and multicultural diversity.
- Christians/Lutheran are minority in most Asian countries

Way Forward

- Greater awareness and exposure to Lutheran Confessions.
- Publication of more local Asian Lutheran literature

2. ASIAN RESPONSE TO PRAYER, PROCLAMATION AND MISSION

- Prayer as a Spiritual Discipline
 - Needs Contextualization
 - Enhances Ecumenical Relations and Inter-faith Relations
 - Reaches out to the marginalized groups
- a. We acknowledge that prayer as a spiritual practice (theological, ministerial and missional) is a heritage from both Asian spirituality and Lutheran tradition. We embrace prayer as a gift from God, inviting us to participate in the triune life in and of God. As a contemplative practice it is our way of joining God in God's walk with creation in God's delight (praise) and God's suffering (intercession). Prayer is our human response of love to God's love. It is love meeting Love that met us before. In participation with God, prayer leads us to walk into the world in love to proclaim God's good news of liberation to all creation and embody the good news in our mission.
- b. Our walk with God into God's world binds us to the world in gratitude and service. God's good world mediates grace to us (sacramental), and since the fallen human world is in need of grace, it is mediated through the scripture (proclamation) and Sacraments (embodied

grace in our collective living). Theological and missional practice therefore needs to be contextual; contextual in Lutheran theological heritage and Asian expressions. Luther's theological practices were pastoral. Issues derived from the context were scripturally engaged and dynamically applied.

- c. Theological practice begins with an understanding of human predicament of creatureliness and seeks to discern God's historic engagement in resolving the predicament in Christ. Sin as a human predicament is both personal and institutional, thus it alienating us from Godly living. Christian mission therefore involves Church's participation in proclamation of the good news, that God in Christ invites us to Godly living and to participate in the pain of God; God engaging with the broken world in bringing about healing.
- d. As participants in Godly living in the world we acknowledge that we are part of a larger household of God. As being inhabitants of various rooms we walk through hallways where we communicate and collectively engage in service to the world. Our cohabitation in this larger house calls for a greater understanding of each other. We therefore affirm that to be a Christian is to be ecumenical. In this light, we understand the 2017 as a commemoration of the reformation rather than a celebration. We also recognize that our Asian Lutheran identity is a historical accident. And our larger concern in our contexts is what it means to be Christian in our own contexts rather than what it means to be a Lutheran. We

discern our meaning to be a Christian in our journey with other Churches including the Roman Catholic.

- e. The World as being God's world consists of people of all faiths. Being created in the image of God by the One God who is God of all human communities, all belong to God and are from God. They therefore bring to us the gifts of their experiences of God. As co-walkers with them we are called to engage in conversations for mutual understanding and widening of our horizons. We also are called to work with them for the renewal of the broken creation.
- f. We are aware that sections of humanity are subjected to suffering due to human greed and pride. We therefore turn to those who are at margins in repentance and by recognizing that the Crucified comes to us from the margins. He then leads us to God's life with those who are at the margins. A theology of the cross therefore is by necessity a missiology of the cross.

Noted Contextual Challenges:

- Practicing prayer in daily life has not necessarily been emphasized as a discipline of faith. Or, it sometimes has been forced to be practiced legalistically.
- Lutheran sermons sometimes give an impression that a message comes "from above" in a doctrinal style down to the people in the congregation; paying little attention to the real context in which they live.

- Lutherans seem to have a good relationship with other Protestant churches in their respective countries, but not with the Roman Catholic Churches. The historic document entitled "The Joint Declaration of the Doctrine of Justification" (1999), an agreement between the LWF and Vatican has not been widely circulated among or studied by the clergy or lay on a local congregation level. Lutherans in Japan are going to commemorate Luther's 500th Anniversary of the Reformation in 2017.
- Cooperation with the people of other faiths is not uncommon in the area of diaconal work, especially for the victims of the disaster, the advocacy movement for the needy, and peace movement. The dialogue with the people of other faiths and study of their religion takes place from time to time in several places.
- Diaconal work for advocacy of the marginalized people such as Dalit in India, Burakumin in Japan, workers from outside the country and Genjumin or the original inhabitants of the land in Taiwan, are being carried out.

Way Forward

- Critical hermeneutics of the Bible and meditation on the Biblical text in relation to the context must be taught at the seminary.
- Ecumenical relations should be realized not only on a national level but on a local level as often as possible.
- Dialogue with the people of other faith must be experienced and taught in the seminary.
- Church's diaconal work should expand to advocacy for justice.

3. ASIAN LUTHERAN CHURCH AND DIAKONIA

We Affirm:

- Diakonia is the Church's way of being the continuing Body of the Christ incarnate in the world and is a Christian lifestyle consequent to the grace of God that is given to us in Christ who came to us as a servant.
- Diakonia (Acts of justice, love and mercy), together with proclamation is God's work through the Church as the Body of Christ. These acts of love and mercy shall always be done as a means of God's love to the world through us and not as a means to earn merits or salvation for us or for others.

Noted Contextual Challenges:

- Lack the knowledge and understanding that we (every member) as the Body of Christ is called to be God's channel of love and grace to the world.
- Misconception that Diakonia can be only done when there is money, resulting in many missed opportunity to love and care for those in need.
- Churches at large have either forgotten their call to serve the poor and leave the mandate to the government, Social service department of the Church, Christian NGO, or they do not know how to respond to poverty in the city, failing to recognize that it is part of our spirituality.
- People often do not see or recognize the needy in their community.

Way Forward

- Include Diakonia training in curriculum of Seminary and Sunday School.
- To conscientiously, preach and teach God's love for the world and the privilege of us to be means of that love through the Church's Diakonia acts.
- Initial simple, do-able projects where members can be involved with the needy in their community.
- Liberated to love God and people, resulting in service to God and people.
- Faith motivated Diakonia cf. Augsburg Confession Art. 6.

4. THE LUTHERAN FAMILY – AN ASIAN RESPONSE

"God has therefore most richly blessed this estate above all others and, in addition, has supplied and endowed it with everything in the world in order that this estate might be provided for richly and adequately...For it is of the highest importance to him that persons be brought up to serve the world, promote knowledge of God, godly living, and all virtues, and fight against wickedness and the devil." (Tappert, Theodore. *The Book of Concord, The Large Catechism*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1959, 393)

We affirm

- Family is according to God's creation order and divine will and is an important institution where mutual spiritual, educational, physical, emotional support is provided.
- The regular family worship and the involvement of the entire family in divine worship and repentance is

important. Where the children and parents seek forgiveness from each other.

- The Christian family, in response to the biblical teaching should display mutual respect and honor towards one another and this should be cultivated systematically from young. By this we are also against violence and abuse against any member of the family.
- Family includes not only the immediate family but also the extended family and those under the care (domestic help/care workers etc.)
- Marriage is not a sacrament, but has great spiritual value since it is God who has instituted it.
- Marriage is according to God's will and a gift, where a man and woman **(1)** [see **endnote to statement**] are brought together for a loving relationship, mutuality in service and honor, and procreation. Where a husband and wife are unable to produce children, it does not mean they are a lesser family. On the same note we affirm that is equal value in male children and to female children born to Asian parents for both share the image of God.
- Christian marriage, because it witnessed by God and the Church, it requires lifelong commitment **(2)**. Hence all necessary help must be given to couples before and after marriage, and as noted in Mark 10:9, divorce is not recommended and so is remarriage.
- Since marriage is to be held in honor and requires life - commitment, we disapprove concepts like contact marriages or co-habitation (living together as husband and wife without being officially married).

- The Lutheran Church needs to uphold the delicate balance between marriage and celibacy. Celibacy can be a legitimate choice.
- Mutuality between man and woman in terms shared dignity, responsible dominion over creation, bringing forth children, love, respect and companionship, because together they are created in the image of God. Due to the fall into sin (Gen 3), God's gift of human sexuality has become distorted and misused.
- The Bible does not support same sex marriages, hence it is not consistent with our faith (Genesis 19; Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Judges 19; Romans 1:18-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 1 Timothy 1:9, 10). Nature too tells us that male and female are structured differently to complement each other in their relationship and reproduction. (Deuteronomy 22:5)
- Asian Lutheran churches must make a definitive stand on disapproving same sex marriage and related practices, but we affirm the need to reach out to such people with the love of Christ and where Christians are battling their homosexual problems, they should provide pastoral care and congregational support and acceptance.

Noted Contextual Challenges:

- Increasing divorce rate.
- Male member in a family, which is unable to produce children is allowed to remarry in the Batak culture.
- Increasing rate in living together as husband and wife without getting married (Korea).

- Domestic violence is increasing due to alcoholism/drug addiction (Indonesia/Malaysia/Taiwan)
- Parent – children relationship deteriorating.
- Abuse of domestic helpers.
- Electronic addition seem to have a strong and negative impact on family and marriage relationships

Way Forward

- The role of seminaries in helping pastors and churches in helping with marriage education.
- Premarital education must be done systematically and in a meaningful manner. Proper training must be given to pastors in this area.
- Encourage family home worship, Bible reading, prayer; and the use of small catechism.
- Encourage family out day on special occasions.
- Gender education to youths and young adults, where male – female mutuality is recognized and accepted.
- Encourage remembering of deceased parents or family members (Taiwan).
- Substance abuse and awareness creation is important.
- Systematic preaching on family, marriage and sexuality could be encouraged in the church.

Some References

Image of God (cf. Gen. 1:26f; 5:1-3; 9:6).

Created male and female (Gen. 1:27).

Homosexuality (cf 2 Pet 2:19), (1 Cor 5:1, 6:16-18).

Luther in his lecture on Genesis 19:4,5. He says, "The vice of the Sodomites is an unparalleled enormity. It departs from the natural passion and desire, planted into nature by God, according to which the male has a passionate desire for the female. Sodomy craves what is entirely contrary to nature. Without doubt it comes from the devil." (Plass. *What Luther Says – Anthology*, Concordia Publishing House, St Louis, 1959, 388, p.131.)

4. ASIAN LUTHERAN CHURCH ON GENDER AND INTER-GENERATIONAL EQUALITY:

a. Cultural Barriers: Gender

- Members of the group agree that, it is a common opinion, that, when a woman becomes a pastor it would affect her role as a head of the family too. Though in some places, women are going to the seminary, it depends whether their husbands would support their decision and ministry.
- In ELCM female deaconesses need to be encouraged as former deaconesses have all retired and there are no more ordained deaconesses serving in the churches or ministries. There has been no woman candidate for ordination although the Faith and Order does allow for it. Cultural barriers, male domination, and socio-ethnic issues are seen to be obstacles. Hence, women are reluctant to go for theological training or willing to become deaconesses.
- Hong Kong and Taiwan context, male and female receive equal opportunities in the society by constitutional provision. But women themselves do not want leadership position.

5. Bishop Lungsung commented that from the scriptural point, women and men are equal in the sight of God. The woman is the helper to the man and is made as an equal partner to man.
6. The Bible passages regarding women are sometimes taken out of context; example I Corinthians 14:34-36, and used to suppress the women. This needs corrective interpretation.

Inter-Generational Equality

7. The young people are the pillars of the church, and they should be mentored and cared by the older people. Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, him gave wisdom as how to lead the vast children of Israel out of Egypt.
8. Exclusive to all ages in the church, yet the older people should provide wisdom in leading the young to grow in the churches.
9. HKBP, without knowledge of the Luther's Small Catechism and confirmation, one cannot be regarded as fully an adult in the church.

Noted Contextual Challenges:

10. There are different understandings among Lutheran churches on gender equality between man and woman. Some Lutheran churches take a stand that women should not be ordained as a pastor of the church.
11. Theological influences of the Western churches on the theological and ethical issues have confused and affected the Asian churches.

Way Forward

12. Bible reading and study should be done critically among churches and society to address the above topic.
13. Lutheran theological teaching should be well emphasized and taught clearly on gender equality and inter-generational equality.
14. Seminaries and theological institutions should teach clearly about the biblical barriers on gender equality, so that pastors could carry this knowledge to the congregation.
15. A clearer interpretation on gender equality in the Bible would help to make the man and women to be seen as equal in the society and ministry.
16. The church should help to bring about the recognition and validation of women and youth roles in the church. Otherwise women and youths do not recognize their call to ministry as valid.

Endnotes to the Statement

1. There was an extended discussion on the statement *"Marriage is according to God's will and a gift, where a man and woman are brought together for a loving relationship, mutuality in service and honor, and procreation"*. The representative from Gurukul Mr Joseph Prabhakar, spoke in support of same-sex marriage/LGBT relations hence suggested that instead of the phrase "where a man and a woman are brought together" be replaced with "where people/human beings are brought together". There was another suggestion too by a member from Indonesia that this topic should taken up by a later conference and this statement could be deleted from this section. This was objected by other members hence the Asian Church wishes to maintain the original statement in this document, that, *"Marriage is according to God's will and a gift, where a man and woman are brought together for a loving relationship, mutuality in service and honor, and procreation"*, "lifelong commitment". There was a sideline comment on this phrase, namely, that the marriage vow ought to be seen as an "anticipation that the promise would be kept" not as 'a promise or vow per se). The original statement is retained with the understanding that each individual or church retains the right to their own interpretation or application.

Photo Gallery



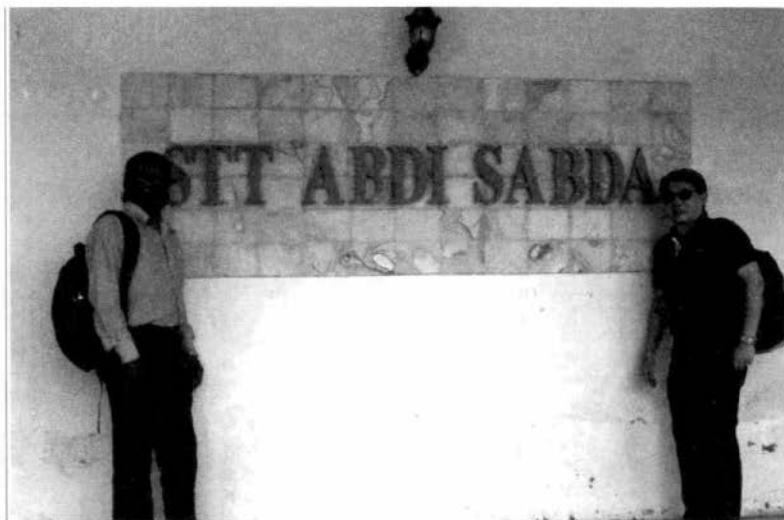
Bishop Suneel Bhanu
Dr William Chang (LWF)



Rev Steven (LWF)

Visit to ABDI SABDA





Vist to ABDI SABDA





Delegates of the Conference



Ps Marey from Malaysia



Conference in Session



Delegates from Taiwan



Dr Philip Baker

Visit to Local Churches in Medan





Vist to ABDI SABDA

